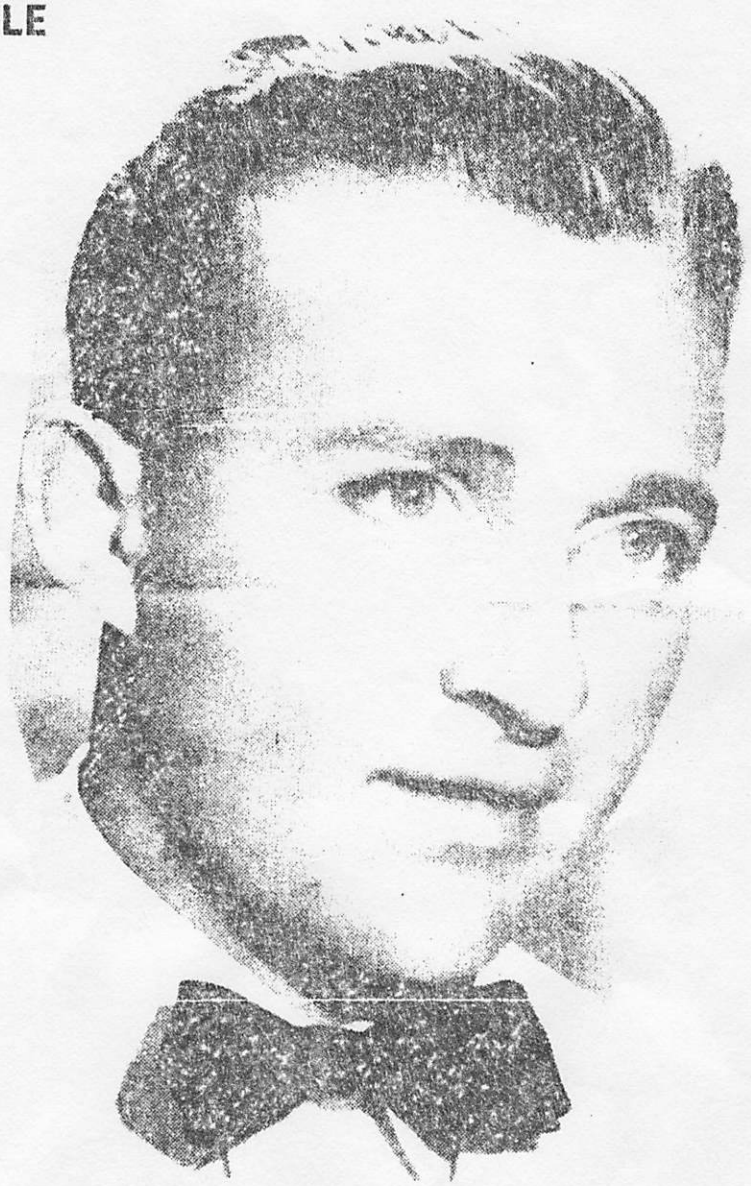
Bing

No. 62

THE INCOMPARABLE



Edited by

Reg Bristo

Best Wishes for a
Merry Christmas
and a happy
New Year

Log Bros

MARY WILL NEVER PART WITH THAT LAST LETTER FROM BING

FOUR years ago this month, thieves broke into Bing Crosby's suite at the Dorchester Hotel in London, while he was appearing at the Palladium.

They stole many valuables, including Christmas presents his wife, Cathy, had bought.

When one of our readers, Mrs Mary Mason, heard of the robbery, she was outraged.

Her late husband, Bob, had been an avid fan of Bing Crosby, and had most of his records, dating back to 1923.

Mary, who lives in Leeds, wrote to Bing, saying how sorry she was to hear thieves had ruined his visit to Britain.

She added Bing could have Bob's collection of old records to make up for his loss, if he wished.

Only a day or two later, Mrs Mason heard the sad news that Bing had collapsed and died on a golf course in Spain.

It looked as if he'd never received her letter.

NEXT day, the postie dropped a letter with a London postmark through her door.

Curiously, she opened it — and found, to her amazement, it was from Bing.

In the letter Bing thanked Mary for her offer.

He deeply appreciated her kindness.

He went on to say his loss had not dimmed the warm feelings he and Cathy had for Britain or its people, and wished her every success and happiness.

The letter was hand-written and signed by Bing himself.

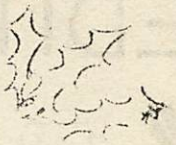
As she read the letter, Mary had tears in her eyes.

For she realised it was probably the last letter Bing ever wrote before his death.

Next week, on the anniversary of Bing's death, Mary will read again the friendly letter—a precious keepsake of the man who brought so much happiness to so many the world over.

"BING": Organ of the International Crosby Circle. No. 62 (Christmas) 1981
Secretary/Editor: REG BRISTO, 7, Greenmeadow Close, CWMBRAN, Gwent, NP44 4PJ

Dedicated to the imperishable memory of the one and only BING CROSBY, a great man and a wonderful artist.



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"A HAPPY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS..." BING'S TRADITIONAL GREETING.

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Seems to come up with terrifying speed, doesn't it? Christmas we mean... or is that merely yet another indication that we're getting old..with young boys walking around as policemen? We jest tho' there's no denying it scarcely seems 12 months since we were wishing you all tbe best..... And if this Christmas seems to be overhung with East, Drink and try to be Merry for tomorrow we're redundant (or already are) those few days do have a softening, comforting feeling about them. But we spare a thought for so many who will have little or no softening....we're told these harsher times are good for us. Well, we're rapidly approaching the "crunch".

Heard a lovely story though. A dee-jay (if you'll forgive the expression) suddenly revolted against the 'pop' rubbish he was putting on - and played BLACK MOONLIGHT by Bing. The result was staggering with people ringing up constantly to ask WHERE CAN I BUY THAT RECORD? The dee-jay had to tell the sad truth - that it was very, very, difficult, if not impossible. This happened in Australia and tho' none of our Aussie friends have told us of it WE HAVE A NEWSPAPER CUTTING TO PROVE IT! We're firmly convinced this will happen worldwide one day..... DRINK UP!

EDITORIAL

It's Christmas time again, and - to coin a phrase - 1981 is on its last legs.... And its been quite a year one way and another. Interest has remained high, BING (it would seem) has continued to please members; new publications have appeared in some profusion. Records, alas, regrettably in less profusion. 1981 saw, in the natural course of events, the fourth anniversary of Bing's lamented passing. Television has done well by us with films ranging from the Mack Sennett's to the 'recent' HIGH SOCIETY, shewn, forsooth, on THE wedding day as, it appeared, a follow-up.

Some of Bing's thousands of radio shows have been repeated on radio with new introductions; his statue, most fittingly, was unveiled at Gonzaga in the honoured presence of luminaries and a strong British contingent

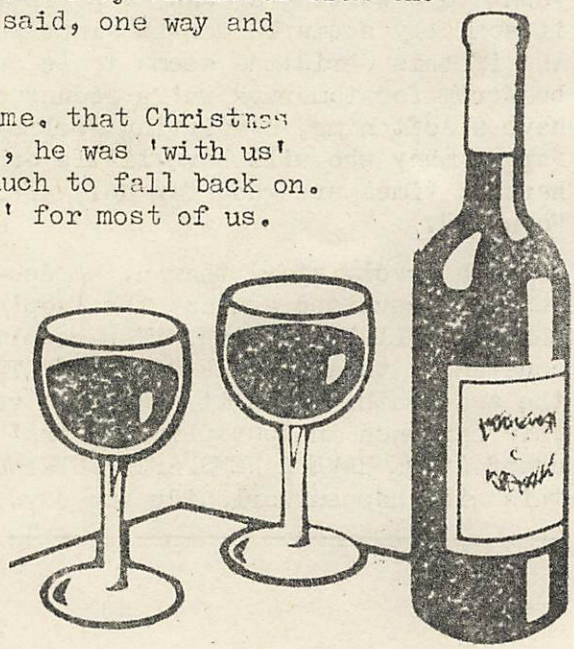
> On a more jarring note we had the unexpected and certainly unwanted experience of a book being published which thought it fairer to magnify the molehills of 'faults' instead of plainly stating the virtues so invariably displayed by Mr. Crosby in an unparalleled career spanning 50 years and more.... Less jarringly, and more appropriately, the book seemed to cause barely a ripple anywhere - here or in the States. The overwhelming impression gained was that it came thro' too clearly as a crude 'hatchet-job' (in the colourful American assessment) in line with present-day trends

Localised Crosby meetings continue to be held all over the country, with what might be described as 'the main event' taking place as usual in Leeds. One of Bing's sons won an important golf tournament. His only daughter was summarily dismissed from the lurid DALLAS TV soap-opera. As we said, one way and another we have been well-served.

It would be idle to pretend, or assume, that Christmas IS the same without Bing...after all, he was 'with us' for so many of them! But, we have much to fall back on. It will still be a 'Crosby Christmas' for most of us.

And assuredly, a case of CHEERS to you, our members - and CHEERS, BING!

And we sincerely hope the spectre of the modern disease - REDUNDANCY - doesn't overshadow your Yuletide.....



"SEE YOU NEXT YEAR" is the optimistic, and slightly sad Goodbye to

THE LEEDS EVENT

As announced in the September issue of BING the annual dinner duly took place at the Mansion Hotel, Roundhay Park, in Leeds. It proved, as always, highly enjoyable - indeed, your Editor enjoyed it particularly well and this, no doubt, was due to feeling much better, and considerably more mobile. The attendance this year was between seventy and eighty, representing a considerable drop from the previous year's 120. No doubt the economic situation is having an effect; prices of meals like most other things continue to rise, and the cost of an overnight stay (necessary in most cases) is getting prohibitive. Guests arrive from almost every part of the British Isles which does make it a very representative gathering at least. Furthermore, it was known that a large number of 'regulars' were, as it happened, taking a late holiday and were, therefore, unable to attend. It is always the desire to have as many as possible there - so, we hope things improve.

Not that we want to give the impression it was sparse. Far from it. In fact, we were beginning to strain the resources of the Mansion with a total of 120. But that is a detail - if necessary, we can always get a larger venue, attractive tho' the Mansion undoubtedly is.

> Its invidious to start listing names but we must make mention of one surprise visitor - none other than BARRY WHITTINGHAM. It may be remembered we told of his horrific accident earlier this year when, in February, he fell 30ft. through the roof of a building. Barry was informed - prematurely we certainly hope - that he would never walk again. With the aid of his mother, he travelled up from Sheffield (whence he had been transferred to an orthopaedic hospital from his home town of Nottingham) to Leeds! Seven months after his accident. Truly a courageous effort and we were delighted to find him in good spirits and determined to prove the doctors wrong about his walking ability. That is clearly some time ahead and his visit to see us at Leeds was by means of his car - and his wheelchair!

And to all those we've met before, and certainly to those we met for the first time, it was great to meet you all!

Michael opened the proceedings (Crampton that is) in his usual brisk fashion followed by yours truly. Then the real business began.....

As foreshadowed, this time instead of cine-films we had a screen-video-player and except for an unfortunately noise-interrupted copy of WE'RE NOT DRESSING it was a big success. Both the sound and the picture of the Mack Sennett 'shorts' were of a quality not seen before.

The competition quiz was conducted by Michael whilst still sitting at table - Arnold Pope (Manchester) had prepared a tape for the purpose. This consisted of the verses of Bing records, stopping just as the refrain was about to start. And widespread were the frowns of concentration. Its not easy - John Scott Trotter appears to have used

similar introductions to quite a number of records. Even so, with such a company of experts the scoring was good though, and I hope I remember rightly, Eric Jackson was the winner - books and LP records were for the winner and runners-up. And the quiz, apart from its general entertainment value, produced one of the highlights of the event. You may recall that last year, when request records were played during the meal, BUSY DOIN' NOTHING struck a chord with everyone and the record was lustily accompanied by the assembled guests!

> Now, if you start off Bing's record of HANG YOUR HEART ON A HICKORY LIMB you will find it almost impossible NOT to join in when Bing finishes the verse.....so it proved at Leeds! It was greeted with a roar of laughter - all had been so quiet while Bing sang the introduction - and then spontaneously sang the start of the better-known chorus!. It was highly amusing but completely invalidated this particular item of the quiz!

The meal, as always, was excellent. Well-served, beautifully hot and no complaints - none that we heard, anyway. I did get the impression, slight, that perhaps something might be done about the film-viewing. The chairs are not soft cinema-seats and perhaps two or three hours presents something of an ordeal in maintaining the position! It happens to be an L-shaped room so no doubt next time it can be arranged that the two portions are divided - one for films, one for socialising. Its a thought - one could drift in and out of the 'film-room' as it were when tired. Or in need of liquid refreshment. Not to mention social chat.....

If there is a general 'complaint' it is that the whole thing flies by too quickly. Much too quickly. Verily it does. This year, everyone (except one!) seemed to be there early and a very prompt, if not early, start was made. Even so, 10.30 seem to rush up - and it was a case of - as our headline indicates - Cheerio! See you next year!

> We say everyone got there early. There was a notable exception. John Marshall of Teddington - and our singing-composer - arrived at the London termini to find his train CANCELLED! Without a by your leave....and no roundabout alternative was possible. It says a lot for John that, instead of abandoning the trip in disgust, he hung around until the next London-Leeds train departed, around 2pm. Happily, he arrived in time for the meal.

Mike Slipman of Legend Music journeyed up from London with a wide selection of the rarer type of imported albums - a facility much appreciated by members albeit they went home even lighter in the pocket than originally bargained for.

John Joyce provided the video films, including that remarkable piece of acting and camera work whereby Father Christmas is put on trial - and Bing plays all the roles - judge, prosecutor, defender, jury, witnesses and so on. A remarkable piece of work by any standards. We also saw MISSISSIPPI and as already noted, WE'RE NOT DRESSING. Quite a coincidence that the BBC-TV showed it a week or two later.

So it ended, with more-than-willing assistance to get Barry and his mother to the hotel for the night. And "See you next year....what a pity we can't do this more often..."

Don't be dismayed. As will emerge in these pages, there are many opportunities around the country to get together with kindred spirits of Crosbyana.

THE GREATEST FINALE

* BY JOHN BIGNELL *

.... a look back over those tremendous final three years, 1975-77

Several books, many articles, a few record sleeves have all been based on the remarkable last three years of Bing's life. It is entirely appropriate that we in the Crosby Circle should present our own exclusive review of that period; here John, in his usual meticulous manner recounts the course of those momentous years.

A couple of issues back I penned a not-too-serious article on the subject of 'possible retirement' dates for Bing during his unsurpassed - indeed, unequalled - half a century of entertaining the world. In that piece I got up to the year 1974; it is about the final three years of Bing's career that I wish to concentrate on this time.

At a distance of six years it is now possible to view 1975 as the year of the greatest 'come-back' of all time in the history of popular music. True, Bing always refuted the suggestion that he'd ever been away but as we all recognised there had been period even since the late 50's when retirement seemed to be taking a slow, gradual course. Changing musical tastes allied to an apparent lack of interest on Bing's part often seemed to be pointing the way. But, back he came with remarkable albums, TV shows, the STAGECOACH film and all kinds of other activities. Like golf tournaments!

But there had been the serious lung operation in January 1974 followed by a long slow road to complete recovery the rest of that year. In the autumn, however, a couple of sides were cut with long-time friend and musician par excellence Johnny Mercer. And, it seems, other things were going on behind the scenes as 1974 drew to a close but it was not until February 1975 that we began to understand what was really happening. Ken Barnes, for instance, had been talking Bing into coming here to record; this he duly did and it resulted in the now legendary THAT'S WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT.

We subsequently learned only on its issue in December that Bing had strolled into a Los Angeles studio in January to record the splendid SOUTHERN MEMOIR album with Pete Smith's orchestra. And, by the way, that little stint occupied two days for Bing. I read this week that the modern 'pop' group The Bee-Gees, young men, are now resting-up in their Hollywood home after taking ELEVEN MONTHS to record an album. But, I digress from the legendary to the trivial.

Back home for a holiday in his beloved Mexican retreat in the spring and early summer Bing was back recording part of his

BINGO VIEJO album in June.

UNBELIEVABLY, BACK IN BRITAIN -

In July, almost unbelievably, Bing was back in Britain for what appeared to be a 'working holiday' during which he recorded a memorable 'Parkinson Show' in July at the end of a week during which he had recorded his album with his all-time great colleague, Fred Astaire.at the Wembley Studios. We then began to get the almost non-stop series of TV and radio interviews, newspaper articles, visits to race-courses and golf links - a delightful 'sporting' appearance in the BBC's famed 'Grandstand' during which he placed a bet! And here we must, yet again, pay tribute to the sterling efforts made by our good friend, Leslie Gaylor, who was so instrumental in getting Parkinson and his producers to approach Bing with a view to his appearance on the programme - and also, of course, to the efforts of Ken Barnes and his colleagues in firing Bing with the idea of such extensive recording in Britain.

> Many ICC members, of course, were in the wildly enthusiastic audience which greeted Bing on the BBC 'chat' show. A much smaller number were delighted - perhaps thrilled is the better word - to be present in the recording studios of Chappells in Bond Street, London, to actually witness Bing recording.

September 1975 saw Bing back home in the States recording the rest of the album he had started in June.

FLYING RUMOURS !

We in Britain felt we had done pretty well with so much activity right on our doorstep - so to speak. But the so-happy British fans did not, apparently, take account of the continued persistence of Ken Barnes and others, including Lew Grade, who seemed determined that the greatest entertainer of our time did not slip into obscurity or retirement.after such a momentous year. And Bing's own recorded message to the Leeds dinner of that year confirmed that he had, over a period of two days in early September, recorded an abridged version of Mark Twain's classic story TOM SAWYER, to be released on 3 LPs.

Early in '76 - which in retrospect can now be seen to be the most momentous year - rumours were flying that he was - at last - prepared to do a 'live' series of concerts in Britain. Something, forsooth, for which Britain had been waiting more than 40 years to see.

> A chance remark in the presence of pressmen by Bing to the effect that he felt he should give a performance or two in gratitude to his 'loyal British fans', far from going un-noticed, was immediately seized upon by impressarios.

Before going further on that line, however, 1976 had started with Bing recording a few tracks in January which were subsequently to be added to and resulting in the BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES album. There followed the bombshell: BING IS COMING TO THE PALLADIUM IN JUNE! Suddenly we seemed to be back in the 30's and 40's. News of Bing began to dominate the media all over again. There came the cold douche of the announcement that all seats for the Palladium season

were sold. Subsequently it was learned that this announcement was based on the phenomenal sacks of mail which reached the Palladium box-office within 48 hours of the announcement and that the seats weren't actually allocated. This was, in fact, a device to halt the flood of applications! Happily, the ICC were able to assure a degree of priority for its members. And, it will be recalled, all the proceeds from this first Palladium engagement were donated to charities - leading to Bing's subsequent reception at Buckingham Palace and the presentation of a scroll by the Inner London Council.

> Bing came all right - and gave shows which left all others standing. Shows which require no further description here. None will forget Bing's total dedication...how he came striding on as soon as the curtain rose - and stayed there virtually to the end. No rationed "second-half" token appearance for Bing!

It was a 'tour de force' of staggering proportions, played to houses which were jam-packed all through the fortnight. And, be it noted, this man of 73 not only did all this, but did it in a sweltering heat-wave such as London had not seen for years and years. Happily, we all have the authentic souvenir of that wonderful performance in the form of the double 'LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM' album.

What an experience it was to see the capital almost Crosby crazy! Even the London buses were running around proclaiming "IT DON'T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT BING!"

The heatwave of 1976 went on - and on. And so did Bing - in quite incredible fashion. He seemed to be everywhere - Preston, Glasgow, Dublin, Manchester; golfing up and down the country from Gleneagles in Scotland to Ryein Sussex....a wonderful recording session for Decca in July from which came the highly acceptable FEELS GOOD, FEELS RIGHT album. After one of his longest-ever visits, Bing was back in America to yet more recording in October and November of that remarkable year.

With the coming of 1977 we had, perhaps, got into a state of expecting a new Crosby album every couple of months! Actually, during this period of 3 years I am reviewing Bing was, astonishginly, the most prolifically recorded artist in the world! Also, we were even asking if Bing would return in 1977? There were in fact stories that he was considering buying a home here.

THAT HORRENDOUS FALL

In March of 1977 we had the shock neww of Bing's horrendous - and inexplicable - fall from the stage in Pasadena. No one was in any doubt at all, once the details became known, that Bing had suffered a very serious accident indeed. Part of the stage on which Bing had been performing descendad in de-elevator fashion. Whether he was aware of this and had forgotten, or whether he was totally unaware, has never been said. By grasping curtains on his way down it was said Bing minimised the full effect of his fall - about 20 feet - but it remains clear that in hurting his back (that most debilitating of injuries even to a young man let alone one of Bing's age) he had a bad shock. With hindsight we now know that it was this accident that was the single most direct cause of Bing's final exit from the world stage. Certainly Bing never appeared to fully recover from this major setback.

All hopes of a further visit - which had been mooted - and further stage appearances seemed inexorably dashed. None of us believed the extraordinary events of 1976 could possibly be repeated. But this discounted an essential ingredient of Mr. Crosby's character - sheer courage and determination. He had found a warmth of welcome here which had clearly overwhelmed him, experienced as he was to warm welcomes world-wide. 'Will anyone turn up?' had been his laconic query when the question of Palladium appearances was seized upon. Moreover, this warmth had certainly been exhibited all over the United States where, contrary to popular belief, Bing's many concert appearances had proved just how well-remembered he was among his own countrymen and just how admired and respected he was. Painfully and reluctantly we abandoned any hopes of seeing Bing back here, even for his customary visit, leave alone stage shows.

A FRAILER, PALER BING....

With the prospects so bleak - and painful - for Bing, it seemed little less than a miracle when, after what was surely a 'make or break' appearance at The Concord in California on 16th August 1977 Bing decided he would come to Britain again and we had the almost unbelievable news that he would be at the London Palladium again from September 23rd to 8th October with a final out-of-town appearance at the Brighton Centre on 10th October - a Monday. So, against all the odds, it happened again.

Arriving in early September he first of all recorded his SEASONS album - in three days. Thence to the Palladium. We saw, by general opinion, a frailer, paler Bing and there were many who noted that his back was obviously causing him pain. But the fine, resonant, powerful voice remained unimpaired.

He completed the two-week 'sell-out' stint on Saturday 8th October and at the end of that final show in London an extraordinary, spontaneous show of affection from the audience appeared almost to un-nerve Bing. As he stood centre stage with the cast around him the entire house stood and paid noisy and unashamed homage. From the stalls they poured down the aisles. Not hysteria, be it noted, just a unanimous display of affection and gratitude, not only for that particular night but for the thousands of occasions on which he had so charmed and entertained us. Our life-long friend....

Yet, how much more significant it turned out. No-one in that theatre that October Saturday evening could have foretold the dramatic events of the week that followed. True, Bing had deteriorated physically and the suffering showed at times. Even so, he had performed in the old style, as talented, accomplished and debonair as always. And it is certain no-one in that theatre that October Saturday evening knew that less than a week later Bing would be with us no more. Yet, was there somehow a premonition among that audience - of which so many of us were part - that this was indeed the culmination of a show business career never before equalled and probably never would be again despite the claims made on behalf of more youthful 'kings'.

RE-AWAKENED SADNESS..

It is with a reawakened sadness that one sets down the events of the week commencing Monday, 10th October 1977. It was to be a very full week for Bing Crosby...and his last. The Brighton concert repeated the 'sell-out' success story of previous concerts before an audience of capacity which numbered thousands. The first time, in fact, this huge, elegant auditorium had been completely full.

And it was at Brighton that among many other celebrities, we saw Bing meet up with that legendary British singer par excellence, Gracie Fields. A happy meeting. Like all the previous concerts, the one at Brighton was tremendously successful. And poignantly, it proved to be the last. So Brighton had a unique honour which it has suitably commemorated.

Next day, Tuesday, Bing was back in London for a photographic session for pictures to adorn the SEASONS album and - fatefully - to the BBC radio studios where during conversation with Alan Dell Bing recorded for broadcasting purposes, tho' subsequently issued on the album THE FINAL CHAPTER, eight songs. The final one being - ONCE IN A WHILE. To the BBC therefore, and Alan Dell in particular, fell the honour of presenting the very last broadcast Bing performed - the last of literally thousands dating from the later 20's.

On the Wednesday we subsequently learned that Bing had been discussing the purchase of a nine-hole golf course with residence in Kent, and this may be taken, surely, as an indication that he had had no physical misgivings of the fact that he had only two days to live.

The family returned to the States and most people assumed that Bing had gone with them on that Thursday. He had not, as we know, for at the long-standing invitation of friends, he flew to Spain. And there, in a country we hadn't much associated with Mr. Crosby, he played a game of golf. He "had a very good round" - and died on the way back to the clubhouse..... It was Friday, 14th October, 1977

The news was stunning. Numbing even. And by another remarkable coincidence, it happened as scores of Circle members were making their way to Leeds for the annual event and where they were overwhelmed and bowed down by the news - and a horde of press, radio, and TV people. And our members there proclaimed on television that that particular "show would go on" - as Bing would have certainly desired. And it was at this meeting that the very last recorded words of Bing - given to John Bassett - were read, not only to the members present, but to the whole TV audience. "Take care, now - always yourfriend, Bing."......

After his triumphant, not to say, astonishingly active, return to the concert stage, we had every reason to believe that Bing was really indestructible. Those tremendous three years had given no indication at all of a sudden departure.....

As a final postscript to this summary of those three incredible years I can find no better tribute to the astonishing use to which Bing was planning his activities than by mentioning his intention to concert-tour Australia in February 1978 and what a crushing blow it was to our Australian friends that this was ruled out in the most devastating way; there was a proposed tour of Japan - would you believe! - and then Germany. A third "Parkinson" show was on the cards. Apparently an appearance on the BBC's THE GOOD OLD DAYS was definitely scheduled.

Recording plans included an album with long-time friend Joe Venuti as well as one with Bob Hope; and it is understood Bing envisaged another British album with SWEET SUBSTITUTE, the three British girls who so capably attempt a combination of the

the Boswell and the Andrews Sisters. Even a final ROAD film was being actively discussed....

It is a matter for fruitless conjecture what would have happened had Bing not died in the manner he did. By common consent a croaking invalid of an aged man is an unbearable thought. Would Bing have finally and officially 'retired'? Would he have said "That's it - from now on I fish and golf - and travel when I feel like it!" Its hard to imagine that, either. A true, born, entertainer he could never resist reacting to show business demands or suggestions.

What is certain is that should anyone come along to dispute Bing's status as the greatest entertainer the world has so far seen (a status only vehemently denied by Bing himself incidentally) if he or she is able to pack as much activity into the last three years of a fifty-one-year career, as Bing did, they may have a case for consideration.

Editor: A most comprehensive summary for us - and posterity - by John. And our thanks for his fine effort.

It is our profound opinion that Bing, after a lifetime belittling his own gifts and efforts, suddenly did realise the untold wealth of respect and admiration for him that existed worldwide.....And, almost in a frenzy of "Have I left it too late?" set about giving what he felt might be a true "Thank You" to the millions who had so appreciated all he had done. And we also like to think that realisation came about as a result of his increasing visits to Britain. Common sense - of which Bing had more than his share - must have told him that a man in his 'Seventies could not possibly endure (as an entertainer) for much longer. Indeed, he was inclined to write himself off in the 50's!

Perhaps the most delighted - and astonished - of his admirers were the older ones, those who had followed his activities almost from the start, certainly from the early 30's. They had long ago given up all hope of seeing Bing performing on stage. They would not, perhaps, subscribe to the view often expressed that Bing was singing "better than ever" in those 3 years. They would agree, however, that he was still singing popular songs better than anyone else, and whatever had been lost in the passage of so many, many, years, the essential qualities of Bing remained to the end. Beyond the end, in fact, for we will go on enjoying his efforts. And no doubt this current Yuletide season will have him as much in evidence as ever....

To the younger members who had the experience of seeing Bing 'live' as the saying goes, the years will come when they will be privileged to proclaim:

WE SAW BING CROSBY !

Oddly, we seem never to have featured an article on the lady who clearly played a major part in Bing's life...an omission we now put right. We found this article among our files and, alas, have no knowledge of where it originated - or its date tho' there are one or two clues as to that. Here it is as it appeared.....

KATE CROSBY — OUR MA

Money was short in the Crosby family - but love was plentiful. Here, BOB CROSBY, Bing's brother, talks about the woman who brought them up with kindness, firmness and humour.....

Not very long ago, my brother Ted, going through some old papers, found one of the notes our mother used to leave for us on the kitchen table. It read: Catherine will peel the potatoes - Mary Rose dust the dining-room - Ted scrub the kitchen floor - Harry fill the woodbox. If that woodbox isn't full, you'll hear from me, Harry.

To me, that note brought back vividly the sound of a voice at the back door of the old house in Spokane, Washington State; "Bob, come here!" Ma called only once and since she kept her stick handy, we came. No nonsense about its hurting her more than it did us! Ma was as strong in her convictions as she was in her will and muscle.

Today, at eighty-seven or eighty-eight - we're not sure which - mother is as much the matriarch, the force that holds us all together, as she was when that note was written, some forty years ago.

Behind the soft-spoken gentlewoman that she is today, we can all still see the slim, beautiful blue-eyed young Irish housewife who made us toe the mark. When she calls, we still come.

Of the brood of seven that Kate Crosby reared, with all too little help from our wonderful, lovable but sometimes irresponsible father, Larry came first - then Everett, Edward (Ted), Harry (Bing), Catherine, Mary Rose and myself.

Dad, after whom Bing was named, was a book-keeper for a produce house. He never made much money, never knew the value of a dollar and loved life and people far too much to care.

"Nothing's too good for Kate!" said Dad. His paydays were a sort of game with us. We never knew what he'd bring home - a washing-machine, a vacuum cleaner, a huge radio with coloured lights and all sorts of fancy knobs.

Ma never complained, never hurt his feelings. Well, the look in her eyes seemed to say 'here we go again'! We never could afford it and at the end of the "trial period" the dealer always got it back.

MA HAD TO BE STRICT

Ma believed a man should be head of the family and she saw that Dad was. Yet she was forced to do all the managing, and whatever Ma had to do, she could do.

She was born Catherine Harrigan, one of two girls and four boys, in Stillwater, Minnesota. Among my earliest memories are her stories of how her grandmother stood off the Indians with a musket. These tales, told while she baked bread or mended shirts or knitted sweaters for someone, were never just idle reminiscences. She told them to all of us to help prepare us for life. "Whatever you have to do, you CAN do!" was the way they ended.

She had to be strict with us. For over 30 years she had growing boys on her hands and the entire neighbourhood depended on her as we did, and used her as I'm afraid we used her. In time of trouble it was Kate Crosby that people called first.

One of her relatives was a nurse and from her Ma learned all she could about the care of the sick. During the influenza epidemic of World War I when Larry and Everett were in the service and all the rest of us were sick in bed, the doctor was called only once.

This overworked man took our temperatures, felt our pulses, and put on his hat. "I'm wasting my time here, Mrs. Crosby," he said. "You're doing everything for them that I could do." And at the same time, Ma was doing it for half-a-dozen households that had sick people.

Looking back, it seems to me that Ma just went from one emergency to another, but I don't think she ever fainted in her life, and its hard to remember tears in her eyes. That's why people turned to her.

Kate Crosby could be firm without giving pain, and her mind seemed to leap from a problem to its solution without being overwhelmed by emotion. She knew what had to be done and did it, and in her busy helpfulness people found the greatest comfort of all.

Bing was about 15 when a city pool opened in our neighbourhood with a big swimming meet. Bing had become quite an expert swimmer but it wasn't something he could admit at home. When Ma said she wanted him to enter all Bing could say was 'Aw, Ma, I can't swim well enough!" "Then you will practice," said Ma - and she relieved him of his household duties and at least once led him by the ear to the pool to practice. The older Crosby boys complained of favouritism - but Bing won several mendals and proved that the practice had been worth it.

Complaints of favouritism never bothered Ma. Ted was a boy when 'wireless' came in. He and a pal built a set, learned the Morse code and sent each other messages right across town.

So long as he would practice the code, Ted didn't have to scrub floors or wash dishes. When Larry and Everett complained, May said "What are you two doing with your time? Learn something useful - and I'll give you all the time you want to work at it."

With so many of us, money so scarce and household work so plentiful there was, I suppose, bound to be friction. Ma didn't mind, but woe betide the kid who complained to an outsider! When the older boys were still at school they had to work at part-time jobs to help pay the bills. They brought their money home to Ma who gave them back what she thought they needed.

Family finances had improved by the time I came along but we still carried on sharing the household work and we still ate plain, simple, food. And what's more, liked it.

DAD'S PASSION FOR MUSIC

Ma was certainly strict but when my brothers and sisters and I get together talking over old times, what we remember is not so much Ma's strictness but the sound of her voice - singing. We had a piano, and Dad played the mandolin and guitar.

We all brought our friends home and Ma cooked us huge meals, usually of mulligan stew - and bread pudding - and by the way, her bread pudding is still Bing's favourite dessert. And after the table was cleared, she joined in the singing with us.

Dad had a real passion for music. One pay-day he came home with a gramophone, the old hand-wound kind, and a stack of records. On his face as he came in was that nothing's-to-good-for-my-wife look; on Ma's, that here-we-go-again expression.

But this time, Dad meant to have his way. May somehow kept the payments up and the phonograph stayed. From it, Bing acquired that sure sense of timing and that confident, old-pro ease of delivery that he had even before he left home.

WE GOT A SHOVE...

When the time came for us to go, Ma not only didn't hold us back - she gave us a shove. In World War I, there was no talk of how Larry and Everett might escape the draft. "You get in there and do your bit!" said Ma. Even Ted got in for a while although he was pretty young at the time. But Ma did have what seemed a bottomless teapot where she saved what she could of the household money and as each of us left home, she presented us with a stake.

I already had a job when I left, singing with Anson Weeks for a fantastic 75 dollars a week. He didn't know whether I could sing or not, but by then of course Bing was the hottest thing in show business - and I was his brother. The day I left Ma reached into the teapot and gave me a ten-dollar bill. Dad's present was a budget he had worked out for me in his neat book-keeper's hand - so much for food, so much for travel, hotels, clothes, even shoe-shines were included.

A few weeks later he wrote me saying: "Its not the same with all of you gone."

For the first time in their married lives my parents had no children to worry about, no money problems. When Dad retired, Bing bought them a house in the San Fernando Valley. You could have put Dad down in the middle of nowhere, and he'd have found friends and something to interest him. But I realise now it was lonely for Ma for a while. She just didn't know how to slow down.

After Dad died, Ma insisted on keeping the house. She objected

when Bing wanted to hire a driver for her. Every week she went to play bridge with some friends her own age - "the girls". She still plays with them today. She was afraid "the girls" would think she was putting on airs. It took Bing, Larry, Everett, Catherine and myself to persuade her that a hired driver was not an unbecoming affectation.

> Less than a year later, Dixie, Bing's first wife, died, and Bing asked Ma to live with him. At first she wouldn't even discuss it. She finally agreed only when Bing pleaded that he needed her help with his four growing boys, but even then she wouldn't sell her furniture. "They'll grow up someday, and I'll want my own home again," she said.

When Bing married Kathryn Grant, Mother immediately started flat-hunting. "No house is big enough for a bride and a mother-in-law, " she declared.

That's where my new sister-in-law proved herself a real solid citizen as far as I'm concerned. Kathryn appealed for Mother's help in understqnding not only her new husband but the whole Crosby tribe. "She says she needs me!" Mother said to me sceptically a few days before the wedding. In my own mind, I'm sure that Mother stayed only because she didn't want Kathryn blamed for her leaving.

When Bing and Kathryn's son was born, Mother again got ready to leave. They asked her to stay on to help with the baby. About the time Mother again started talking about a home of her own, Kathryn had a girl. I went over to see Ma recently and she was telling me about Bing's two babies.

> "Isn't it wonderful that I've had all this experience with babies?" she said, with that wise, quizzical smile of hers we know so well. "Now I can really feel wanted!"

There were two nurses in the house, and everything that money could buy to make babies safe, well and happy. Nobody was kidding Kate Crosby! But if it made us any happier for her to pretend she was wanted - well she'd certainly go along with the gag.

When I told Kathryn about this, she threw up her hands in despair. "I don't care how many nurses and doctors are here," she said, "when I have to be away from home my last waking thought at night is: 'Well, everything will be all right - Mother's there!"

But Mother still has her furniture in storage.

Come to think of it, she's even more remarkable as a mother-in-law than as a mother. Few people know that Dixie left a good part of her money to her mother-in-law.

Mother keeps track of her twenty-four grandchildren and twenty-one great-grandchildren. There always seems to be one needing an operation or college-tuition money. The book-keeping must be a big job, because whenever Mother writes a cheque for one kid, she methodically sends one to all of the others, too.

By the time I was born, Larry was a grown man and away from home. By the time he got back for a visit, Everett was gone, and then Ted....

Ted. At mother's last birthday anniversary we decided it was high time that we all get together with her, for the first time in our lives.

I never did count how many of us crowded into Bing's house that day. There were seven of us, plus in-laws, plus grandchildren and great-grandchildren and their in-laws.

But what I remember best about that party is the sight of my sisters disposing of their cigarettes before going in to see Mother. Now, Catherine and Mary Rose are both grandmothers but Mother has just never learned to approve of women smoking. Mother knows that they smoke, and that she knows, but that's the way it is.

GETTING MA'S AGE RIGHT

Likewise, no one took a drink at Mother's party. Mother knows that most of us take a drink now and then. Still, we know how she feels, and in her very narrowness we see an integrity that the world can well use today. You can adapt too easily to changing times. You can be too pliable. Its a good thing, we think, for a few strong people to cling to the old ways.

That was the day we ganged up to make Mother tell us her age. This is something she has always felt was just none of our business. I think its a matter of principle with her to keep, if she can, at least one small barrier between the generations.

> We delegated Bing to do it - after all, he's Dad's namesake and could always come closest to twisting Mother around his finger - as Dad used to. Bing sat down beside her and began a long, innocent, conversation about old times. "Let's see, which is this - your eighty-seventh or eighty-eighth birthday, Mother?" he said finally.
>
> Mother didn't bat an eyelid. "Well, let's see," she said, with a frown. "I was three years younger than your father, wasn't I? Or was it four? I was a bit younger than my sister, too, and she - come to think of it, I was always a bit younger than most of the girls of my same age!"

We gave up. We still don't know her age. But whatever it is, I'm sure of one thing - Kate Crosby will always be a bit younger than everybody her own age.

Editor: The true matriarch from the earlier years of the century. Those who come from a large family (as your Editor does - seven like the Crosby's but with the emphasis on girls, not boys!) will recognise and appreciate the Crosby household scene - a quite ordinary one, of course, until the phenomenon of Bing became apparent. But Kate certainly presided over a considerable 'family' in the latter years. And as mentioned, it was always clear that Bing never failed to show the utmost deference and respect to his mother.

A word about BOB CROSBY, the only other one of the family to enter show business. We never, of course, heard Mr. Crosby Snr., sing - nor Larry, Everett and Ted, so it was left to Bob to show there probably <u>was</u> A Crosby timbre inherent in the family. But, with

the possible exception of Gary from the 'first' family, it seems to have dried up. Certainly there is no indication of a Crosby voice from Harry and Nathaniel.

It says much perhaps for Bob that he did make his way in show business; his lot was an unenviable one. If he sang well one would hear "He's only cashing in on Bing's name!" If he didn't sing too good it was "Hmm...he's no Bing!" On the credit side, of course, was the fact that his name DID get him a start with various bands as a vocalist. His real success came, of course, when he was selected to 'lead' the disbanding Ben Pollack Orchestra, thereby saving it and creating quite a career with "his Orchestra" and his Bob-Cats. When that, with most big-bands, began to go out of fashion Bob turned his hand and talents to compering and general show-business management with a fair degree of success.

Not unnaturally, Bing selected (in his turn) Bob's orchestra to accompany him on some notable records, e.g. SAN ANTONIO ROSE and LET'S START THE NEW YEAR RIGHT and though he duetted with Bing on radio as vocalist they made no vocal records together.

We've come across a book (1980 publication) entitled THE MUSIC GOES ROUND & ROUND - A Cool Look at the Record Industry (Quartet Books, London, Melbourne, New York) edited by Peter Gammond and Raymond Horricks. Its mildly interesting and while it does deal with the classical side one must confess the real emphasis is on the 'pop' record industry of the last 15 years or so. And in so doing, it is most revealing. Like a lot of contemporary writers concerned with today's record industry it is slightly nauseating to read their writings, convinced as they are that they have made massive contributions to 'art'! Consider this:"(Tony Hall) was the great unsung hero behind the initial success of Tom Jones. I know this for sure, because I was around the record company almost daily at the time, and I witnessed at close quarters what was going on. Tony was the first person to get a shoulder behind Tom's 'Its Not Unusual". He was the first to rave about the disc when it came out of the studios, and I remember his sallying forth like a Roman gladiator to do battle on its behalf. HE GOT ALL THE KEY AIR-PLAY SPOTS AND, BY THE TIME HE'D FINISHED HIS PLUGGING STINT, THE ENTIRE STAFF AT THE BBC WERE SICK OF THE SIGHT OF HIM. BUT, WHAT HE SET IN MOTION IS NOW RECORDING HISTORY. (The capital letters are mine

So, that's the way super-stars are made. I've never seen it put quite so blatantly before. And then there is this:

"....a firm called K-Tel, which had made its fortune selling brushes and kitchen gadgets to North American households by saturation television campaigns, started operating in Britain. One of the first things it did in the early '70's was to compile an LP of old pop hits, assembling tracks by different artists from several different labels on one record...they then proceeded TO BLUDGEON THE TV PUBLIC INTO BUYING THE RECORD. That kind of

success...has been repeated several times since.

References to Bing, however, are as follows:

"The success of the big bands were ruling the roost. Singers were kept very firmly in their places - which meant the central choruses of a (band) arrangement, and a minor credit on the record label: 'With Vocal Refrain By....' Sometimes, too, the bands would travel with a vocal group, but all singers had to sit, smiling but silent, on the edge of the bandstand when their talents weren't being utilized. Some of them would prove to be very talented indeed (like the extremely young Peggy Lee with Benny Goodman, Ella Fitzgerald with Chick Webb and Frank Sinatra with Tommy Dorsey. But it made little difference to their status - until the rise to Pole-Stardom of Bing Crosby.

> "Bing was really a kind of fulcrum for pop; and because of him much that has happened subsequently can be viewed with some objectivity. He began like many others as a singer with groups (The Rhythm Boys) and then bands, and his popularity rapidly became so widespread that no bandleader could afford to hire and hold him. From this the prototype of the superstar (today's included) was moulded. Singlehandedly, he ended the near-monopoly of the big bands. His record sales were extraordinary by any standards, and in fact, Bing provided the first instance in pop history of a solo singer on disc who would survive many of the fads and crazes destined to follow him. Blessed with a soft, easy and relaxed method of expression, Bing also required and therefore created a new kind of musical accompaniment. Instead of the singer's being the vocal ham in a big-band sandwich, his or her accompaniment had now to be so sculpted that it enhanced the singer's own intrinsic qualities....Bing himself went from one success to another. (There are still arguments about how many million discs WHITE CHRISTMAS has sold). And he took modern pop singing into the sacred grooves of Hollywood.
>
> "So the way was now cleared for other singers to make it as soloists and - they hoped - superstars. The wiser and more successful of them didn't try to copy Bing but concentrated instead on the natural development of their own styles...."

Hmmmma...again! One could argue about those who were "wiser" not to try and copy Bing! There was quite a host - and they're still fairly successful. Elsewhere, the authors of this book say:

"...there was an influx of radio artists; Gene Austin, Vaughan de Leath and Nick Lucas were among the first of this new breed of 'crooners' to sell large quantities of records. And in the Paul Whiteman orchestra, a twenty-three-year-old singer called Bing Crosby was just about to start a recording career that would overshadow in popularity even Caruso's...."

The book is priced at £6.00. It might be mentioned that the book also deals with what is a 'favourite' grouse of mine! Talking about modern recording methods, e.g. multi-microphones, multi-tracks (24 is the current number of these, soon to be increased to 32!) the book says: "Mixing is very much a matter of taste. A lot

of the engineer's own make-up is bound to project itself into the job....I've known mixing sessions go on all night...a foolish practice because after midnight your sense of musical judgment decreases. Today, mixing is an art form....an engineer who started in the days of mono and simple stereo, WHEN A CORRECT BALANCE HAD TO BE ACHIEVED DURING THE FIRST TEN MINUTES OF A SESSION BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SUBSEQUENT MIXING... has a great advantage over the man who has only learned his craft on multi-track."

To which we might add: YOU'RE TELLING US! For years I've been asking why this emphasis on multi-tracking with its consequent mixing? Seems to me a problem is created needlessly...but in truth, I never thought to see it so clearly expressed in an "expert" book. Note what they say again: "..(in the days of 78s) when a correct balance had to be achieved....because there was no subsequent mixing."

To Hades with mixing: record the sound as it comes naturally!

ACROSS THE FOLLOWING PAGE - Among several studies of Bing in various roles and moods, we have a picture of sorts of Bing's mother and father - we say 'of sorts' as the quality varies thro' many issues. This is quite a rare picture and is the first of them that has appeared in BING. It fits in nicely with Bob Crosby's story you have just been reading.

And on the page after that another 1934 story to delight and intrigue our members, especially the younger ones. These vintage stories are, according to mail received, greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Incidentally, we are NOT printing on the back of these 'reproduction' pages now in order that their clarity is not thereby impaired, so you are not getting accidentally blank pages!

This 1934 effort was a real corker! Needless to say, nothing more was ever heard of this (surely) imaginary project. Nevertheless, the whole concept is intriguing. That Bing was going to sing 'straight', even in operatic style was something we all thought about from time to time. To do so with a Ray Noble score was an exciting prospect indeed. Ray Noble was, of course, Britain's bandleader who 'upped' and went to America - in 1934 incidentally - where he was a very big success, both as bandleader and light comedian with the affected 'toffy-nosed' English accent and appeared in many films in this fashion. BUT, and its a big but, he also wrote a string of beautiful songs, most of which Bing sang in a style which must have been wonderful reward for Ray Noble. THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU, THE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS, GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART, LOVE IS THE SWEETEST THING have remained standards; he also wrote purely musical items such as CHEROKEE, part of an 'Indian Suite'. One reader wrote to us after the last issue appeard with its '1934' feature: 'I honestly didn't know Bing was so big here then. I thought Bing's first big impact was PENNIES FROM HEAVEN!' Which just goes to show.... also on that page is a tiny item which fits in with John Bignell's "Did Bing contemplate retirement'? syndrome.... And, much newer, a review of the HOME ON THE RANGE album which appeared on its release over here. Note the reviewer's personal favourite of MEXICALI ROSE - and his remark: "That Crosby certainly can swing!"

BING'S PARENTS Catherine and Harry Lowe Crosby. Harry was a bookkeeper who loved music and was always singing. Harry was a convert to Catholicism.

BING CROSBY TO GO "OPERATIC" IN NEW RAY NOBLE FILM

Insists That He Is NOT a Crooner

APPARENTLY determined to leave the ranks of the crooners, Bing Crosby is to play the lead in a film called "The Yellow Nightingale" as soon as he has finished work in "Mississippi."

In this new film Bing will sing semi-classical, operatic, and concert numbers in a "straight baritone" voice. The music for this new film is to be written by Ray Noble.

It has always been my contention that the baritone range is the ideal one for dance band singers. Most tenors fail lamentably, in my opinion, even giving the fellows who sing with our bands the benefit of the doubt that they are tenors.

Therefore Crosby, who has always insisted that he is not a crooner, should be a success in this film. He has the voice, and with Noble numbers, he will certainly have the tunes.

* * *

Jimmy Kennedy, writer of the two biggest hits of recent years,

"HOME ON THE RANGE"

BING CROSBY

(Brunswick LAT 8152 12 in.)

● Home On The Range ● When The Bloom Is On The Sage ● I'm An Old Cowhand ● Gold Mine In The Sky ● Mexicali Rose ● Silver On The Sage ● Boots And Saddle ● My Little Buckaroo ● Cool Water ● Navajo Trail ● You Don't Know What Lonesome Is ● Blue Shadows On The Trail

MEMORIES OF BING'S past successes come a'crowdin', with the help of some of his yesteryear backing specialists such as Scott Trotter and Victor Young.

These items are interesting as samples of the vocal and orchestral styles in bygone years—but, that apart, they are eminently listenable in their own right.

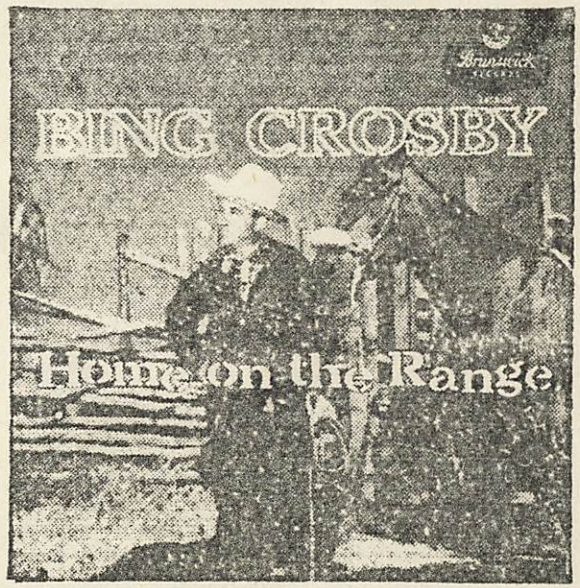
Bing's range range is from the lazy, pensive "Gold Mine" to his hop-along "Old Cowhand" with the Jimmy Dorsey boys. That Crosby certainly can swing!

Personal favourite: that hit of the early forties, "Mexicali Rose." D.T.

CROSBY: Old crooner in whom Hope springs eternal.

Home on the range **BING CROSBY**

LAT 8152 (Brunswick)



THE Newspapers will announce BING CROSBY'S retirement. (Bing Crosby will deny it).

CROSBY QUIZ

********** CHRISTMAS **********

As we always say, this is entirely for your amusement only. Don't be downcast if you can't answer all the questions - we couldn't! Not without consulting discographies, sleeves notes &c. And the idea is that you TRY and answer without those aids! Not, at least, until you have tried and surrendered! Best of Yuletide luck!

1. Bing is indissolubly linked with Christmas; and that was so long before WHITE CHRISTMAS! Bing made a large number of records which actually include the word CHRISTMAS in the title - around 26 we make it. Can you name ten of them - no need to include WHITE CHRISTMAS! That's just too elementary!

2. Mr. Crosby made six Christmas records with The Andrews Sisters. Can you name four of them - and you are NOT looking for the actual word CHRISTMAS in these?

3. Bing sang ADESTE FIDELIS in Latin as well as English; name another 'foreign' Christmas record.

4. Bing recorded a song - fairly early on - which contained the name of a traditional English pantomime. There may be others - we haven't checked too far - but this one should spring readily to mind.

5. Does the name CHARLES TAZEWELL mean anything to you?

6. On which Crosby album does the Vatican Choir (Rome) perform an item?

7. Bing recorded ADESTE FIDELIS (O Come All Ye Faithful) twice on 78s; firstly in 1935 and secondly in 1942. Name the accompanying orchestra and vocal 'assistance' in 1935 and 1942. They were, of course, different. (The same differences apply also to SILENT NIGHT, as it happens).

8. Does WHITE CHRISTMAS appear on Bing's Autobiography Set (of five LPs?

9. Being a 'film' song, WHITE CHRISTMAS naturally appears on one of the BING 1-15 albums. Which one? (The set known as BING'S HOLLYWOOD)

10. On which album does WHEN YOU TRIM YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE appear?

11. And which contains THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY?

12. What is the earliest date in Bing's recording career that he took part in a traditional carol recording?

13. A 'single' 45rpm of CHRISTMAS CANDLES was issued - in 1964. Who was the musical direcfor?

14. Bing and his (first) four sons made a 78 in 1950; what was its title and what other artists were involved?

15. On which Christmas album, issued and reissued, do Paul Weston & his Orchestra and the Norman Luboff Choir appear?

Well, don't be dismayed! Check the answers after Christmas....we're joking - they appear later on in this issue!

THE NORWAY AFFAIR

Most of us had quite a surprise when it was learned that, following his momentous appearances here in 1977, Bing had also been to Norway to give a show. Truly there was no knowing just what Bing was doing....you will see elsewhere in this issue that few knew he had flown to Spain that fateful day instead of home to the States with his family.

The show was televised in Norway - indeed, it seems to have been televised in almost every European country except Britain. This is quite startling. We know the show was televised because video-cassette owners here actually have the recording! Truly the diligence of some of our members is breath-taking in their relentless quest for Crosbyana!

Be that as it may, TREVOR WAGSTAFF, one of our members living in Hornchurch, with some enterprise wrote to the BBC TV production department as follows:

On 25th Sept. 1981 BBC-2 showed SONGS FOR EUROPE from a concert at Mysen in Norway, an event called the 'Momarkedet' organised as a charity by the Red Cross annually.
At the beginning of the show they gave a viewing of some artists who had previously appeared there, including Bing Crosby taken during September 1977 only a few weeks before his passing.
Many people who saw the two 2-week Bing Crosby concerts at the London Palladium in 1976/7 thought it a tragedy that neither the BBC nor ITV recorded a show for subsequent television relay. A film of one of those wonderful concerts would have been a part of musical history.
However, it seems the Norwegian TV network (Norsk Rikskringkasting) did just that with the Sept. 1977 'Momarkedet'.

Apparently, according to reports, the 'Momarkedet' concert was similar to the London Palladium ones with the Joe Bushkin Quartet and received high praise in the Press.
Would it be possible to show the 'Momarkedet' concert on BBC TV please? I am sure this could easily be arranged with the Norwegian TV people.
All the London Palladium concerts were sold out; thus I feel a TV showing would reach a wide viewing audience.
Hoping you will give this suggestion your favourable consideration.

Sad to report, this highly reasonable and cogent letter received the usual printed "Thanks we'll bear it in mind" card from BBC-TV., the stereotyped thing that is sent out by the thousand and indicating no real notice has been taken.

We feel we might make them take a bit of notice if we all reinforced Trevor's letter with a similar one asking if they - the BBC - could make efforts to obtain the video-recording of this Norway concert from their Norwegian colleagues. There is obviously a fairly free interchange between European and indeed transAtlantic TV companies and corporations. Drop them a line at the BBC TV Centre, Wood Green, London....

A WORD AT CHRISTMAS

LES GAYLOR

Truly, the Christmas issue of BING seems to come around with terrifying swiftness; how the years seem to be flying by! Alas, this time it comes at what is being called - and no doubt of it! - a time of recession. Many people, most of us, are feeling the pinch of the economic situation now being experienced. Worldwide 'tis said.

Obviously, this is being reflected in the record scene, with particular reference to the lack of initiative with regard to Bing Crosby records. As many members have written to me - this is certainly a time to look around and realise again just what Ken Barnes achieved in recent years. But it seems even he hasn't been able to generate any action - tho' one never knows! Much as we appreciated Ken Barnes's efforts I happen to know that Bing himself did, too. We can only hope that 1982, despite the signs turns out a better year in all respects than, to be honest, seems possible as I write.

Alan Dell, speaking to me by telephone recently, remarked that things were pretty grim in the record business. And that, I suppose, is plain for all to see. We are completely aware in any case that record companies now seem willing to release items that will not only sell, but sell quickly. All of which reminds me that as far back as 1961 (was it <u>really</u> 20 years ago?) Bing told me in his dressing-room at Shepperton Studios for the ROAD TO HONG KONG film that there was no point in him making new records "to lie on dealers' shelves...people just don't want my records any more." Bing was monumentally wrong, as subsequent events proved, but there was enough in the remark to indicate that changing tastes as well as 'recession' were very relevant items.

Turning to more cheerful things, it is a fact that of the many thousands of letters I have received over the years concerning Bing, a large proportion have proclaimed that they do not consider Bing's records to be by any means the sole topic of interest. Clearly they like browsing over matters Crosby and looking back over this year's issues of BING I feel no one can complain that the Editor doesn't offer a wide selection of material to hold the interest. And in this connection I am thinking of a young fella with whom I work who went on - of all things - a two-week trek to Iceland! That was in October. Sensibly, he had trained for some weeks; he needed to for when he was loaded up with his gear it weighed all of sixty pounds. Nevertheless, he found room for the smallest radio he could find to take with him. Arrived in Iceland the very first programme he heard was an old Jack Benny programme featuring, not Bing, but Bob Crosby!

The broadcast, it seems, was coming from the big American air force base near Reykjavik, capital of Iceland of course, and while there my friend decided to sort out a bookshop as soon as possible with the object of obtaining a book about Iceland to help him in his tour. Surprisingly, he found one called "The English Bookshop" - and on looking in the window the first book he saw was - THE CROSBY YEARS, by Ken Barnes!

> One day he went on a conducted tour which took in a large lake. To his great surprise the guide announced that "we in Iceland are very proud of the fact that the late Bing Crosby fished at this lake, and because of that fact fishermen from many countries still come to fish here!"

Bing certainly got around!

A few weeks ago I got to meet Peter Murray one of the BBC's top dee-jays as you probably know. He was presenting his OPEN HOUSE broadcast from Sandown Pavilion here on the Isle of Wight. Most readers will know that this show is a mixture of records, guests, and chat. The comedian Jimmy Tarbuck was a guest and while the programme was actually on I nipped up to ask Peter Murray if he would get Jimmy to do a brief talking imitation of Bing! This materialised and went down very well, especially as Jimmy recalled on the air meeting Bing both at a golf tournament and on a Parkinson Show

> The audience reaction both to his 'imitation' and his comments on Bing was really rapturous, being greeted with tremendous applause. I felt very pleased that I had instigated the whole incident.

In the '50's when Pete Murray was resident dee-jay at Radio Luxembourg he played many Bing recordings at my request and was always most co-operative, as indeed was his colleague, Teddy Johnson. So I was really delighted to learn how well Teddy had done (with Roy Chappell) at the big events in Tacoma earlier this year in connection with the statue unveiling. I recall that, besides being a good radio 'presenter' Teddy Johnson is also a fine singer, as is his delightful wife, Pearl Carr. And all this brings me to revealing for the first time the big part Teddy played in Bing's final years, so ably reviewed in this issue by John Bignell. But John didn't know of this.

During 1974 Teddy Joynson was presenting a record programme on BBC Radio 2 on Sunday afternoons, the script of which was written by none other than our good friend Ken Barnes who was in his early days as a record producer.

Teddy often played one of Bing's records and I dropped him a line one day thanking him for the record and his remarks. I took the opportunity to include a letter I had just received from Bing saying he was interested in recording an album of what he referred to as "Southern Songs". As Teddy was obviously a Bing admirer I knew he would be interested in Bing's letter.

He was. and after reading Bing's comments, Teddy promptly passed the letter over to - Ken Barnes. As a result, Ken wrote to me and that was how our relationship began.

Over a lengthy telephone conversation I was able to give Ken all

kinds of background information about the Crosby office, including the name of the then President, Mr. Basil Grillo, Crosby Enterprises, a long-standing correspondent of mine. There followed a series of letters from me to Bing, Larry Crosby and Basil Grillo on the subject of Bing possibly coming to London to do recordings for Ken Barnes. It was great work by Ken that finally convinced Bing that it was a fair proposition; thus the great man came to London during February, 1975.

It will be seen, therefore, that Teddy Johnson played a tangible part in starting off that epic final three years and, therefore, deserves our thanks.

As a result of my furthering of Bing's cause over the years, it seems my name is now lodged in the files of most of the newspapers. This is obvious from the hundreds of letters I receive about Bing - and naturally I refer the writers to our Secretary and thereby swell the ranks. All sorts of requests are made in this correspondence but mainly they boil down to do I have anything authentically autographed by Bing?

Well, of course, I have many items bearing Bing's autograph - mostly signed in my presence, too. But at this moment I can't really part with anything like this, much as I would like to help and give pleasure to others - members and non-members alike. With books, photographs, letters, cancelled cheques, record sleeves I have more than a hundred examples of Bing's autograph. The records, by the way, include two 78s featuring Bing and Bob Hope with the labels autographed by the famous pair.

Other items include copies of the BING SINGS SHELL TV song advertisement - a particularly valued one. Another one caused me a bit of embarrassment at the time I obtained it! This was the Pelican 'pirated' issue of SOFT LIGHTS & SWEET MUSIC. I had a feeling Bing might have shewn some undue curiosity as to the origins of the album. Happily, he didn't and my slight embarrassment was needless, not that I could have told him much about it. It might, however, have sparked his interest to make enquiries elsewhere.

Only twice have I parted with autographed items. One of these is in the possession of a local lady who has one of the largest postcard collections in the world. It was a coloured postcard of Pebble Beach Golf Course sent by Bing to his friend, Charles Graves of London.

The other was of a little scrap of white cardboard - the only thing at hand at the time when an air-hostess got Bing to sign. But, this was on the aircraft which took him to Spain on his very last journey. The mother of the hostess handed it over to my local friend and ICC member, Margaret Billington, who in turn gave it to me. Now Renee Chester of London - one of our staunchest members - is the proud owner of that historic piece of cardboard.

I had an interesting letter from Ann Mann whom members will know as the producer concerned with the broadcasting of Bing's radio shows by the BBC. Saying 'she had heard of me' she wrote that the BBC were not very pleased with the recordings they had acquired from the States. The shows had obviously been shortened and some songs had been cut out here and there - and they, the BBC, didn't go much on the editing

Ann Mann's executive producer wrote to their source of supply - and I have no idea who this could be - and one thing he commented on was the Philco Radio Time show of January 5, 1949 with Bing's guests Harry James and Betty Grable.

> British listeners will recall that when Bing sang MY DARLING, MY DARLING in this show as broadcast by the BBC Bing could be heard singing the same song in the background - and a little behind the main voicing.

On the broadcast re-run of these shows, Benny Green has been brought in to introduce them and perhaps to make up for some of the less-than-30 minutes that they run, and in connection with the January show in question he remarked that when Bing sang MY DARLING, MY DARLING we were to hear the very first attempt at multi-track recording which went wrong - or words to that effect. This was nonsense, of course, but it seems the American suppliers, when queried on the point, did say it was multi-tracking! And that was why Benny Green announced it. Some fault obviously developed - but it had nothing to do with deliberate double or multi-tracking.

Even so, its been fine to have these shows repeated. And Ann Mann told me how amazed she was that Crosby collectors have managed to obtain much cleaner copies of these old radio shows than the BBC has managed!

Now, may I take this opportunity to wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to Editor Reg and to all our members. Also grateful thanks to stalwarts like Judge Francis X. Smith of the Supreme Court of New York and Leslie Wilson of California for their kind attention and co-operation throughout the year. To good friends Phil and Margery Clarke (Portsmouth) for all their great Bing interest and especially their enjoyable social events. But I could go on - Jim Reilly of Walthamstow who has proved such a reliable chauffeur! and many others....so, to EVERYONE, my very best wishes.

Member MICHAEL KENEFICK of Co. Cork wrote to Liam Nolan, who presents programmes on Radio Eirann, suggesting it was be appropriate if Bing's death was commorated in the programme on October 14th. He hit the jackpot - for the whole hour's programme that night was devoted to Bing.

And a very good programme it turned out, too. Liam is either very well informed or very well brief for he got all the usual 'errors' right! He explained the various dates given for Bing's birth - but ended it up with the right one. He correctly explained how Bing got his name, NOT the story about running round Spokane playing cowboys and Indians and saying "Bing!" every time a Redskin bit the dust. Furthermore, he played a very nice selection of records and the programme was altogether very listenable indeed and a handsome tribute to Bing in the land of his forefathers.

Even as heartwarming was the 'phone-in response to the programme while it was actually being transmitted. A steady stream of calls came in with dedications to Bing and asking for different songs - and recalling happy memories.

There were all kinds of radio tributes on that significant day..... STAN AUSTIN of West Drayton, who did such a handsome tribute for our members a couple of years ago, put out another very dignified tribute over hospital radio in the Middlesex area.

THE RECORD SCENE:

KEEPING TRACK with BERT BISHOP

Christmas is a'coming - forsooth, its almost here - as the title of the reissued LP echoes, and with it the ever buoyant expectation of something new, something different, something special on record for us. Clearly we cannot go on building our collections ad infinitum; certainly not with new material. But we all know there are many goodies which COULD be in our Christmas stockings. The outstanding Ken Barnes-engineered tracks, for instance, if only those concerned were to have what for them would be a sudden rush of blood to the head. Alas, we know the moment, or the economy, is not propitious.

Newsfilters/hro' that WORLD RECORDS have had songs put on tape for them by an Australian afficionado - enough for two albums - which would almost certainly be in the 'different' category. Also, Japan continues to be a likely source for the slightly rarer and unusual compilations. In that area, though, we are faced with the twin frustrations - high cost and difficulty of acquisition.

All in all its been a fairly good year, especially with dear old 'Auntie Beeb' issuing THE FINAL CHAPTER which I'm sure we all agree is a gem unlikely to be outshone in sentimental value at least. It must also be said that anyone coming to Crosby could spend a small fortune on building a collection that would embrace most of the 'popular Bing', all the later albums, and much else besides from Whiteman through CBS to Satchmo (to say nothing of radio material) that is currently available in most areas.

However, it is with the usual avid interest that those of us endowed with that material look at the latest 'track events' that may be found in this run-up to the Yuletide season.

"SENTIMENTAL" BING CROSBY: Decca Elite TAB 31 UK Stereo Around £4.99p

There's Nothing that I haven't Sung About
I'm Getting Sentimental Over You
Nevertheless
What's New?
As Time Goes By
Old Fashioned Love
Time on my Hands
That Old Black Magic.
The Way we were.
Once in a While
The Rose in her Hair
The Night is Young and you're so Beautiful
At Last.
When I Leave the World Behind.

This is, of course, mainly a re-grouping of the FEELS GOOD, FEELS RIGHT album with some titles from the double album BING issued shortly after Bing's passing. Nicely presented with the standard company publicity photograph as the main sleeve picture, the sleeve is bereft of notes. UK Decca have always done well by Bing and it is something that they are, with their now limited resources of material, maintaining their catalogue of Crosbyana. It is unfortunate, I feel that the album is still pretty well full price. There are no variant takes so if you are only in for the songs you may

may wish to pass this by - hard to do tho' this may be. Perhaps you collect sleeves; few of us will be without the songs that have been issued in the comparatively recent past.

"CHRISTMAS IS A'COMING" Music for Pleasure MFP 50314 Stereo. £1.99

That Christmas Feeling
Christmas is A'Coming
The Christmas Song
* Ruldolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.
Is Christmas Only a Tree?
You're All I Want for Christmas
* Here Comes Santa Claus

Christmas Carols: Deck the Hall
Away in a Manger
I Saw Three Ships
The First Noel (*)
The Twelve Days of Christmas
O Fir Tree Dark
Christmas Carols: Good King Wenceslas
We Three Kings
Angels we have heard
I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Though a reissue (MFP have reissued this about 5 Christmasses in a row now) with no variations - and its a budget label - I feel it worth reminding members of the content as it was first released after the publication of THE BING CROSBY LP-OGRAPHY. Entirely seasonal, of course, but one of the very best of the Christmas albums no one should be without. And it also has a most appealing picture of Bing on the front.

NOTE: The three songs marked * above are also included in another MFP (50484) CHRISTMAS WITH THE STARS, thae remainder being non-Bing MFP albums are freely available - certainly well displayed in the various Woolworths.

"REMEMBERING THE 40'S" Readers Digest Association Ltd. 7-10 Old Bailey, London EC99 1AA

(See current National press advertising for FREEPOST ordering; price of the set is £23.95p)

San Antonio Rose
Trade Winds
Silent Night
Jingle Bells
Pistol Packin' Mama
Swinging on a Star
Don't Fence me In
As-cent-tchu-ate the Positive.

I Can't Begin to Tell You
South America, Take it Away
McNamara's Band
Alexander's Ragtime Band
Galway Bay
Now is the Hour
Careless Hands
The Four Winds & the Seven Seas.

This eight LP boxed set is a package of positive nostalgia featuring many famous names of the War and post-War years apart from Bing who is generously treated with sixteen tracks as listed but spread over the eight albums. Only the last named title on side 2 (as it were!) above is new to micro-groove and is, indeed, a most interesting inclusion. An intriguing track with piano-only accompaniment. It is a nice entertaining set with 128 songs performed by the original artists. A little expensive if its only Bing you're interested in - but easy payments are allowed!

BIX BEIDERBECKE 'The Studio Groups - 1928" WORLD RECORDS 'RETROSPECT' SH415 £3.99 (around)

Mississippi Mud (with Frankie Trumbauer)

Following the last BIX LP which was all Bing as well, we now have this one of a series which features on this one Bing track. Perhaps as some consolation there are complete back sleeve notes by Brian Rust the doyen of the jazz-world on record and no mean presnter of Bing on radio. For readers who've only heard Bix on

what we call Bing recordings this 18-track LP is a good jazz buy.

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS; Ronco RTL 2062 £5.49p

Around the World.

Again, just a single Bing track on this album of 22 songs by various artists - the title apparently comes from Dean Martin's hit of the 50's so titled. This is another "advertised on TV" issue so you know where to look for it if interested.

THE YOUNG BING CROSBY RCA RJL 2011/2 Japan

Its a Good Day — The Music of Home
Aloha Means I Love You — The New Ashmolean Marching Society
(plus unknown at this time tracks from the Whiteman era).

A bizarre compilation this, with 1960 recordings cheek by jowl with those of a very young Bing Crosby on tracks which are almost certainly the RCA tracks on earlier LPs of this title. The four songs mentioned were, of course, issued only on an Australian EP before this. Goodness knows what the price will be for wh t is a double album necessarily imported.

LIVE AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM United Artists K-Tel 172/98550 DUTCH

The title says it all, but it is worth nothing that this is a different - and reputedly - better presentation (sleeve as well) than previous issues.

PORTRAITS FROM THE PAST; Label unknown.....

This LP features air-shots of Bing duetting in singalong with Frank Sinatra, taken from the latter's radio series for the Vim company and is material not previously issued. The mere fact that it exists is the only reason for mentioning it here. Regret the paucity of information.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG: 20 GOLDEN GREATS. Warwick UK. £5.49p.

GONE FISHIN' — EASY STREET (GARY CROSBY)
PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

This 20 track album is also being extensively advertised on television. The advertisement, however, does not make mention of the Bing tracks shewn above. We have also mentioned the unusual circumstances of a duet by Louis Armstrong with No. 1 son Gary. These tracks can only be considered as a bonus if you have a special affection for Satchmo. The tracks include his great ones, old and newer, including WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD.

18 GREATEST SINGERS OF THE CENTURY MCA UK £3.99p

Let's Do It.

For the sake of keeping the record straight so far as where and when Bing appears it should be noted that he is featured on many of the US Readers Digest boxed sets as follows:

A TREASURY OF JAZZ GREATS: Sweet Georgia Brown (8 LP set)
AN OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS: God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen (6 LP set)
SING OUT AMERICA: Sioux City Sue (8 LP set)
THEY SING THE SONGS: Bing featured but details unknown (8 LP set)
THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENTERTAINMENT: Swinging on a Star (10 LP set)

Meagre Bing content noted only for the discography compilers!

Finally, a Happy Christmas to all members - and a good 1982 with special thanks and greetings to all who help in this column with record news.

PARAMOUNT V MGM

BY KEITH PARKINSON

who takes up a question posed in the previous issue of BING **********

Ray Leach wrote something in BING last time which must have crossed the minds of most of us over the years. "If Bing had made his films for MGM instead of Paramount they would have been much better." And on the face of it, so it seems. The only comment that questions the supremacy of MGM over Paramount is that Bing's film musical career spanned 30 years whilst MGM's musical hey-day lasted half that time.

When Bing signed with Paramount, Warner Bros. had a formula which proved sound box-office. Busby Berkeley choreographed his boys and girls, made full use of overhead camera techniques, used Dick Powell and Joan Blondell in lead roles and using themes about the Depression still gave audiences the escapism they rightly demanded. Although Bing was not exactly interchangeable with Powell he could have slotted into the mid-30's Warner Bros. movies quite well.

Then again, RKO were embarking on five years or so of box-office and critical success with the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals. Now I won't suggest that Bing had any more hope at all of imitating Astaire's dancing or even putting over his suave acting performances. But until the end of the 30's, RKO were competing with Metro quite successfully in the movie musical stakes.

Examining the product of Warners and RKO against Paramount in that first full decade of talking pictures it can be said that the RKO and Warner musicals have worn far better than Bing's Paramount product. They had style, and although Busby Berkeley and Astaire & Rogers are very firmly locked into the 1930's, their musicals are eminently watchable almost half a century later. Of course, we can watch Bing in his 'Thirties performances and be totally uncritical, but I doubt whether the viewing public share our enthusiasm.

In the musicals of the late 1930's Paramount probably stood on a par with Universal. That studio had Deanna Durbin and their musical output was centred around Miss D. through to the mid-40's. Like Paramount, they built their movies around their singing star and production values came second. At the time they were immensely popular, as were all Bing's movies. But a reappraisal reveals that their appeal was immediate. They have not passed the test of time in most cases.

Where were MGM while this was developing? They were boasting a

roster of 'More Stars than there are in Heaven' and busily fostering acting talent. A few Judy Garland-Mickey Rooney "Let's put on a show" type movies took them thro' to the 1940's, but they still were not able to offer Bing much more than Paramount were doing by way of singing opportunities. Colour soon changed that, though, and the gap between Paramount and MGM appreciably widened as the 1940's progressed.

It was Twentieth-Century Fox that made the best colour musicals in the first part of the new decade. They managed to make the technicolor process just that little too good to be true and War-time audiences found that was exactly how they liked it to be. In addition they had Betty Grable. She may not have been a great singer but the males in the audience supported her musicals! Among other things, it might be added!

In 1944 MGM's greatest era began with MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, the first of a long line of superb musicals that lasted until the late 1950's and GIGI. Along the way they produced GOOD NEWS, ON THE TOWN, SINGING IN THE RAIN, SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS and many more, all in glorious technicolor. In the mid-1940's Bing could withstand the competition by starting to act as well as to play himself. GOING MY WAY and THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S had good songs, better production values and better stories than before. At that time he didn't need MGM.

It was the ten years immediately following the War which revealed Paramount's shortcomings. Excluding THE ROAD pictures, Bing turned out a series of films which can only be called average. WELCOME STRANGER, MR. MUSIC, ANYTHING GOES and all the ones in between, with the odd exception like WHITE CHRISTMAS, were likeable without being special. MGM made AN AMERICAN IN PARIS which stands up to viewing in the 1980's. Paramount's JUST FOR YOU does not survive the journey quite so well. Ray Leach can prove the point he made last issue by producing as evidence HIGH SOCIETY and it is about this MGM musical that the rest of this article concerns itself.

Bing's 'take' of the proceeds of the film amounted to 200,000 dollars plus 5 per cent of its gross. Before its release in this country on 4th February 1957 it had already earned 6,500,000 dollars in rentals in the USA and Canada. This made it the fourth top moneymaking film of 1956 according to "Variety". It was also Bing's last major movie success - 24 years after his first film starring role in 1932.

Producer Sol Siegel said his greatest problem was working the filming into the individual schedules of his eminent cast. It was worth the effort and produced a memorable teaming of Bing and Frank Sinatra. Celeste Holm, who played Liz Imbrie, compared the acting techniques of Bing and Sinatra. The latter was labelled "unpredictable" whilst Bing was more dependable. "When you're working with them both its like Benzedrine and Seconal on each side," she said in a 1973 inferview.

The American press introduced a slightly sour note into their reportage of the film's American premiere. Thirty seats had been taken by Bing and then he failed to attend, which was regarded as an ungracious gesture.

The Crosby-Sinatra duet of WELL, DID YOU EVAH? re-introduced this Cole Porter piece to the movies. It was originally featured in the

1939 Broadway success DU BARRY WAS A LADY. MGM acquired the film rights and it became a popular 1943 movie starring Red Skelton and Lucille Ball. If you listen carefully to the musical background to that film you will hear WELL DID YOU EVAH relegated to incidental music.

The critics' admiration for the film improved with the passage of time. It was as though there was a slow realisation that the combined acting talent and good music was also signalling the ending of an era. This is what Margaret Hinxman wrote in her 1956 review for PICTUREGOER:

> "Whichever way you look at it, this musical is strictly upper-crust. A film that mingles so freely with the aristocracy of show business couldn't be anything else. But, for the average picturegoer, it sometimes gets as tedious as the morning newspaper report of last night's deb dance. Still, there's a lot of magic in this musical version of THE PHILADELPHIA STORY - enough to make it a must on anyone's list. Its often witty, often dazzling - and the Cole Porter music occasionally memorable. Oddly enough, though, the film is faintly old-fashioned and sometimes dull. The three principals give it all they've got. But maybe you can try too hard to make a wonderful movie. The result is just a little too rich for my taste."

And yet, over twenty years later, Douglas McVay, made a critical re-appraisal which corresponds with the high standing in which most people now hold the film. The following is an extract from a lengthy review which appeared in FOCUS ON FILM:

> "Both Grace Kelly and Bing Crosby give in HIGH SOCIETY the most wholly satisfying of their screen portrayals that I have seen. And in Crosby's singing of LITTLE ONE to the little girl, the vocalist's uniquely mellow, casual, affectionate, homely, impromptu-seeming personality and technique find in (director) Walters their ideal recorder. This scene has something of the air of spontaneity in its easy execution."

Editor: As always, an intriguing and full-of-new-facts piece from Keith Parkinson - and one to make us pause and think! Over all, I find my lf agreeing with him about Bing's films, especially the earlier ones. But I was - and am - of the opinion that those earlier films were rushed out because of the phenomenal demand worldwide (following his records) to not only hear Bing but to see him too. At one time he was making three a year.....as for Paramount, well this was another instance of Bing's loyalty (Decca was another). Paramount were enterprising enough to promote a film featuring the new phenomena - radio stars - in 1932. And, on its success, made Bing an offer he accepted. There is another aspect: if Bing had worked with MGM we would be seeing far more of him for that company hasn't been slow to produce montages of their fine musicals - records as well. I still think, too, that HIGH SOCIETY was sophistication projected to a bizarre degree. But, the musical score and Bing's singing!

"I WENT, TOO!" says PAT FORSTER....

..went to America, that is. We seem to have been inundated during this past year with accounts of trips to the States by our members - to the extent that I started off my introduction to the Leeds meeting by enquiring if there was anyone present who had NOT been to America this year? Besides me, that is! But, they have all had their varied interests and here Pat describes a real journey of Crosbyana **********

Saturday, 3rd October, saw me set off on a great adventure. My first visit to America. A few weeks previously I had written to Kathryn Crosby asking her to convey to Nathaniel my congratulations on his winning the US Amateur Open Golf championship and on that very morning I received a most charming reply. What a lovely lady she is - and a wonderful augury for my trip, I felt.

The flight was the 'over Greenland' one; the glaciers showing up very clearly, as did the Canadian tundra in due course. I was able to get some spectacular aerial photographs. On arrival at Los Angeles we were taken to the Ambassadors Hotel where we would spend the first three days - imagine my feelings at being under the same roof as the Cocoanut Grove! It is a luxurious hotel in its own very extensive grounds and the entrance to the Grove is a double stair-case, hung with crystal chandeliers. I found myself imagining the 'high society' of Hollywood in the 1920-1930's passing up these stairs - to dance and listen to Gus Arnheim and his Orchestra - and the sensational new young singer with his band.

Next day we did a tour of the town, seeing Mann's Chinese Theatre with Bing's footprints on the pavement of The Avenue of Stars. Bing is the only one to have four stars - one for each of the media films, radio, records and TV. We also saw the sculpture to Bing in the Entertainment Centre, a memorial to him.

In the afternoon we toured the Universal Studios and saw many film sets. We were also taken over a star's dressing-room. These are really small bungalows, containing a sitting-room, bedroom, make-up room and kitchen. The one we saw was Robert Wagner's but one could easily imagine that Bing would have had one similar at Paramount, and when on loan to Universal. Next day, the rest of the company went off to Disneyland but I stayed behind and asked the doorman to get me a taxi. When the driver arrived I asked him to quote me a price to take me to Holy Cross Cemetery. He said 30 dollars (around £15). I accepted and off we went.

As you've heard, this cemetery is in a beautiful situation on the hills outside Los Angeles and the Crosby family plot is on a slope of the hill, overlooked closely by a grotto containing a statue of the Virgin Mary. Two gardeners were at work there and all the graves, Dixie's, Mr. and Mrs. Crosby Senior, have a large bunch of fresh flowers on them. Bing's grave is covered with a large blanket of pink and white roses. All the flowers are completely fresh and in that climate must

be renewed every day, I should imagine. he whole upkeep is really first-class and, no doubt, an expensive operation.

> When I got back to the hotel the taxi-driver charged me only 24 dollars (£12.00) -- perhaps he was a Bing fan!

That afternoon I looked in at the Cocoanut Grove itself and stood on the stage where Bing sang all those years ago on the threshold of his historic career. So in one day, it might be said, I saw where it all started - and where it all ended. Truly an emotional day for me.

The next day we left Los Angeles, passed thro' the San Fernando Valley, along Route 66 to Palm Springs where Bing once had a house and where Bob Hope still lives. Then into Arizona to Phoenix. Along the way were sage-brush, tumbleweeds, cactus, canyons '-- all the things that Bing had sung about in his cowboy songs and one almost expected to see John Wayne riding over the hillside.

In Rawhide we had a "cowboy dinner" - ribs of beef and beans, accompanied by live 'country-style' music and dancing. Next day it was up to the Grand Canyon which is so truly magnificent it cannot be adequately described. I saw chipmunks and blue jays and stayed in a park lodge where my bedroom was a "cabin in the pines" - and saw a coyote just outside my front door!

Next day it was on to the Hoover Dam and Las Vegas, passing thro' the Navajo Desert and seeing the Navajo Indian Reservation....Las Vegas is best passed over quickly - a dreadful, garish, place! - so on to the Yosemite National Park high up in the Sierra Nevadas, where we were greeted by a snow-storm but saw the giantredwoods in their autumn glory. The day after it was on to San Francisco, passing over the Golden Gate Bridge. On a tour of the city the hospital where Bing used to give his annual Christmas show was pointed out to us. After two days in 'Frisco we left for Monterey, passing the Burlingame Hospital where Bing passed so many unhappy days and through Hillsborough where Kathryn, of course, still lives.

After Monterey we drove along the Peninsula, passing Cypress Point Golf Course, the famous tree of which Bing took as his blazer-badge emblem; then to Pebble Beach and the golf-lodge where there is now yet another memorial to Bing. We stayed nearby at Carmel and I was able to walk along the beach to the golf-course - a lovely walk, too, with the Pacific rollers one side and Bing's golf-course the other. This was on October 14th, and the significance of that date will not be lost.

Next day it was down the Pacific Coast to San Simeon Castle where Bing stayed in 1934 as the guest of William Hearst and Marion Davies whilst making GOING HOLLYWOOD. I saw the reception rooms, dining-room and private cinema - and the swimming pool which Bing describes so well in CALL ME LUCKY.

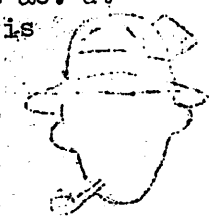
Then it was on to Santa Barbara where Bing had a bungalow on the beach; thence to Los Angeles to fly home. I brought with me over a hundred photographs, several books (including one on the history of the Cocoanut Grove) - and memories that will live forever with me....

> Editor: It would be difficult to arrange a more comprehensive tour of "Crosby" country; we congratulate Pat not only on the amount of ground she covered but also on her graphic, and so interesting, description of it all. No doubt she feels she could write a book on it all.....

TRADING POST

Our usual feature of BING whereby members may buy, sell, or exchange items of Crosbyana such as records, books, tapes, photographs &c. There is no charge for such entries tho' a nominal charge of £1.00 for NON-CROSBY insertions is required. Please keep your advertisements to six lines or less. Where long lists are involved, invite a Stamped, Addressed envelope for same. We rely on the good faith of members and can in no way accept responsibility for transactions. It is the responsibility of members to satisfy themselves they are making a fair deal. And, entries for TRADING POST on a separate sheet of paper help collation and ensure insertion.

In the previous issue the REV. NEVILLE JARRETT offered for sale reel-to-reel tapes 2hrs 5¾ips Philco Shows, film soundtracks &c. at 50p each to CALLERS. We omitted to give his address which is 12 Mulgrave Rd., Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, Cleveland.



BING ties are available from THE BADCE CENTRE, 45 Ropergate, Pontefract, West Yorks; WF8 1JY in navy or maroon, with the motif shewn on right falling abouve 3 inches below tied knot. Price is £2.50 P & P paid.

THE ALTERNATE BING CROSBY, by COLIN PUGH, an analysis of the varying 'takes' issued of Bing's records is available from the Secretary, £2.50 post paid. Overseas rates must equate with sterling.

PHILCO RADIO TIMES, by LIONEL PAIRPOINT, a highly entertaining listing of 104 Bing Crosby radio shows, with song titles, guests, patter and extensive notes, is also available from The Secretary, £2.50 post paid. Overseas remittances MUST equate with sterling.

BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD: The hardback volume of the discography PLUS the A to Z of Bing, i.e. a chronological AND an alphabetical listing of all Bing's recordings from 1926 to 1977, is available as follows: Price £3.50 post paid to UK members; European £4.00, Australian £4.50 surface mail, £6.50 airmail; USA/Canada £4.00 surface, £6.00 airmail.

THE ADDRESS FOR THIS VOLUME IS: JOHN JOYCE (BOOKBINDERS), Saltmeadows Rd., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 3AH :
AND IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT ALL REMITTANCES ARE MADE PAYABLE TO JOHN JOYCE/ICC ACCOUNT.

THE CROSBY YEARS, BY KEN BARNES, now priced at £10.95 by Hamish Hamilton, the publishers, is available from the Secretary at the privilege price of £10.00 post paid (UK only) Limited stock.

THE BING CROSBY LP-OGRAPHY, listing more than 1000 LPs featuring Bing remains available from the Secretary: £2.50 post paid. European members must equate this to sterling; American/Canadian/Australian members 10 dollars surface mail, 12 dollars airmail.

JOHN BASSETT, "Bingville" 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex, urgently requires a mint copy of the US Longines 5-LP set THE BEST OF THE TELEPHONE HOUR, with the bonus LP "COMMAND PERFORMANCE - GOLDEN MOMENTS FROM THE TELEPHONE HOUR. Any reasonable price paid.

(Members may care to note that they may purchase a second copy of BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD for marking off, making notes in &c.)

15 Bing LPs for sale, all in mint condition: SEASONS: BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES: BINGO VIEJO: GREAT COUNTRY HITS: HEY JUDE, HEY BING: LIVE AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM: BING & LOUIS (MFP): FEELS GOOD, FEELS RIGHT: VERY BEST OF BING (WRC 6LPs): Must sell as a 'lot' - £20 plus postage. Will also include as a bonus double LP FRED ASTAIRE/OSCAR PETERSON. T. WARDROPE, 44 Melloch Cres., Tillicoultry, Scotland, FK13 6QJ

(Editor: Must comment that this sounds an extraordinary bargain...)

LARRY FARRELL, 136 Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Eire: Wants ROBIN & THE SEVEN HOODS 12" LP and COUNTRY STYLE 10" LP if anyone can help please.

A 1982 CALENDAR

We have heard from the Bing Crosby Historical Society that they are promoting a "Bing" calendar for next year. The value of this is 8 dollars, with postage estimated at 1.50 dollars, i.e. a total of 9.50 dollars. (At the current rate of exchange this is approx. £5.25p. The calendar is devoted to The Rhythm Boys - though the cover photo is of Bing and each succeeding picture for each month prominently features Bing. "We will offer this calendar AND membership for the cost of membership plus postage. Membership is 10 dollars a year".

Circle members should note this is printed as received and its appearance is not an endorsement, nor need it be taken as non-approval. It is entirely for the consideration of individual members. A Bing calendar has been in OUR minds for some time but always, alas, other things intrude and we always seem to leave it too late.

The address of the BCHS is PO Box 8013, Tacoma, Washington 98408, USA and its aims are to preserve the memory of Bing by acquiring various buildings associated with the family, a museum and hopefully endowing scholarships. KEN TWISS of course, is the President and the Society now has a most impressive list of directors and advisors. UK members will get further news of the calendar in the Society's newsletter due well before Christmas.

LEGEND (MUSIC) 153 FRANCKLYN GARDENS, EDGWARE, MIDD'X have made special reductions for this period only; it has been instrumental in importing (at some risk!) many of the private and semi-private Crosby issues that have proliferated of recent years. Currently the following are available: the prices are plus Post & Packing which is - 1 LP 75p; 2 LPs £1.10p, plus 30p for each additional item. Complete lists of the records can be obtained by sending a SAE to the address given above:

LIMITED EDITIONS:

MR 147	BING CROSBY & HOPALONG CASSIDY	£3.95
MR 151	BING CROSBY & MARLENE DIETRICH, T. BANKHEAD	£3.95
MR 162	BING CROSBY & DICK POWELL	£3.95
MR 208	BING CROSBY & JUDY GARLAND(J. GARLAND VOL 3)	£3.95
MR 221	BING, GROUCHO MARX, M. CHEVALIER	£3.95
MR 237	BING & DOROTHY LAMOUR	£3.95
MR 239	BING, LUCILLE BALL, SPIKE JONES	£3.95
AMALGAMATED 6001	BING, BORIS KARLOFF + 12 tracks	£4.25
SPOKANE 20	DER BINGLE VOL 3 (first come,first served)	£4.95
KOALA 14129	SWING WITH BING	£2.95
KOALA 14207	YOU KEEP COMING BACK LIKE A SONG	£2.95
MCA 177	SHILLELAGHS & SHAMROCKS (authentic MCA issue)	£3.00
TANDEM 1904	BING, F. SINATRA, JUDY GARLAND	£4.95

Cont.--->

REPRISE P10860R	ROBIN & THE SEVEN HOODS s/t Jap Import	£7.50
RCA AFL 1 1854	FANCY MEETING YOU HERE: BING/ROSIE	£2.95
PHILLIPS 6641923	SONGS OF A LIFETIME - double stereo only	£3.79
MAGIC AWE 1	BING'S MAGIC	£2.00
ARTISTIC 001	BING'S PARTY	£3.50
GRAPPENHAUSER 1001	MUSIC,MUSIC,MUSIC (Bing)	£3.99
CBS 35093	BING CROSBY COLLECTION VOL I	£3.25
CBS 35094	BING CROSBY COLLECTION VOL II	£3.25
CBS 35748	BING CROSBY COLLECTION VOL III	£3.25
MF 7007	THE GREATEST HITS OF BING CROSBY 2 LPs	£3.95
MAGIC AWE 4	THE ANDREWS SISTERS (NO BING)	£3.25
MAGIC AWE 3	BING & FRIENDS (10 copies only at this price	£3.95
BRUNSWICK	BING'S HOLLYWOOD (all mint - vol 8 missing...offers...offers...offers....	

DON'T FORGET P & P ADDITION: THESE PRICES REPRESENT QUITE SUBSTANTIAL "CHRISTMAS REDUCTION". We're delighted that SOMETHINGS have come down!

BING'S 1977 PALLADIUM SHOW: SOUVENIR PROGRAMMES FOR SALE
Spare copies are available of the special full-colour programme produced for Bing's last season at the London Palladium in 1977. PRICE £3.00 each, including postage. From: JOHN BASSETT, 'BINGVILLE' 15 OAST WAY, ROCHFORD, ESSEX, SS4 1RZ

2-hr tapes of Bing, including all John Salisbury radio shows, all Bob Machliss's Crosby Collector programmes, and many rare items of Crosbyana. Western, Hawaiian and seasonal memoirs and many others available on good quality (usually Sony) C120. Tapes come complete with own jackets - open-reel also available. Send medium-sized SAE to Arnold Baker, 48 Groomsport Rd., Bangor, Co. Down, BT20 5LR for catalogue of all tapes which are priced at £3.00 (UK post free)

I always feel it is not Christmas-time until I've heard Bing's voice ringing out in a large store. And sometimes of recent years it has been a close thing. Not this year. It was early NOVEMBER when I was walking around the enormous WOOLCO store here - the latest Shakin' Stevens record of someone else's old hit was belting out from the record 'bar' but as one moved away there was an entirely different sound. Bing! It was the CHRISTMAS IS A'COMIN' album and how fine it sounded. More than that - the music faded and a recorded voice said: "Yes, the lovely voice of the well-remembered great Bing Crosby...this album is available at the record department..." and the record resumed. As an afterthought: seeing that this album is now reissued each Christmas, I wonder if its sales are added on to Bing's aggregate? Or does no one bother these days? There's little doubt it enjoys considerable sales via this MFP release each year. I've observed piles of the album disappear in a week or so.....PS. Who IS Shakin' Steven? PPS: I don't really want to know.....

The death was announced on 16th November of the celebrated film star WILLIAM HOLDEN. He made many fine films and won an Oscar - and will be remembered by us as the compere of the 2-hour TV tribute to Bing mounted in America but shewn here. He was 62 - an unexpectedly comparatively early demise. And a lonely one, too, it appeared.

1. Right, standby!: Christmas Candles, Christmas Dinner Country Style, Christmas in Killarney; Christmas Is; Christmas is A'Coming; Christmas is Here to Stay; Christmas Star; Its Beginning to look Like Christmas; Is Christmas only a Tree?; Its Christmas Time Again; A Christmas Toast; Have yourself a Merry Little Christmas; How Lovely is Christmas; I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day; I Wish you a Merry Christmas; I'll be Home for Christmas; Just What I Wanted for Christmas; 'Round and 'Round the Christmas Tree; That Christmas Feeling; The Christmas Song; The First Family of Christmas; The Secret of Christmas; The Song of Christmas; The Twelve Days of Christmas; When you Trim your Christmas Tree; You're All I Want for Christmas. And, we must superfluously add - White Christmas.
These by no means complete Bing's association with Yuletide; he sang, of course, all the traditional carols like Silent Night, Away In a Manger, Good King Wenceslas, and so on as well as associated-Christmas songs like Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Jingle Bells etc. etc. etc.

2. Jingle Bells; Santa Claus is Coming to Town; The Twelve Days of Christmas; Here Comes Santa Claus; Poppa Santa Claus; Mele Kalikimaka.

3. The last named in (2) - Hawaiian, it seems, for Merry Christmas.

4. I WISH I WERE ALADDIN springs to mind tho', as we said, there may be others. Certainly Bing was associated with Ali Baba & the 40 Thieves and Mother Goose....

5. He wrote THE SMALL ONE - A Christmas Story.

6. A Christmas Sing with Bing Around the World.

7. In 1935 with Victor Young & Orchestra and The Guardsmen; in 1942 with John Scott Trotter and Max Terr's Chorus. We might add that these particular Christmas carols were also the subject of some private recordings issued (with organ accompaniment) for charitable purposes.

8. Yes, on the fifth album.

9. On BING-7.

10. On the album A TIME TO BE JOLLY, also reissued as A CHRISTMAS TOAST.

11. I WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS (Warner).

12. SILENT NIGHT in 1928 (19th Sept) with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra as a member of a 'choir' containing other Whiteman vocalists in a medley of Christmas songs.

13. Fred Waring (and his Pennsylvanians). It was on the Reprise label.

14. A CROSBY CHRISTMAS; John Scott Trotter Orchestra and the Jeff Alexander Chorus.

15. As for (6) above.

All you have to do now is check with all the relevant sources - and - tell us where WE'RE wrong! Our fingers are crossed, however!

IF you did well - say a dozen right out of the 15 - CONGRATULATIONS!
IF you did NOT do so well, don't worry. It doesn't mean your not a fan;
They are printed upside down for the benefit of those who read the magazine from back to front -- as, we are assured, some do.

ANSWERS TO THE CROSBY CHRISTMAS QUIZ ON PAGE 29:

CHRISTMAS - 1944.....

I was getting increasingly uncomfortable. We hadn't passed a soul in miles. Nor a vehicle. Our jeep made little noise on the snow-covered road. Just now and then we'd hit an icy patch and the tyres could be heard crunching...ahead of us - and not all that far either, perhaps a mile-and-a-half - we could see gun-flashes. The firing appeared to be aimed at targets on our right. Odd, our own troops had been to the right of us.....

Now we were in the main street of the little town, not much more than a village. I knew where the Headquarters was for I'd been there less than a week ago and went straight there. "Stop here, corporal," I said, and got out. Sure enough, there was the doorway with just the slightest gleam of light.

"There's still firing up ahead, sir," said the corporal, "and to me it sounds like German 88's..." But this couldn't be; this was 15 miles at least from where the Germans had so startlingly burst through the Ardennes Forest on their final counter-blast. And that was only yesterday! My unease increased as I noted no sentries outside the HQ..still nobody in sight, anywhere.

I pushed open the door..and found virtually a land-version of the Marie Celeste. Maps, papers, all kinds of gear - all the signs of a still-occupied HQ. But still not a soul in sight...surely we had not retreated from here already? Impossible...then I was conscious of a radio still functioning. An ordinary radio, not a communications receiver. The familiar voice of Bing Crosby was singing that new song of his, WHITE CHRISTMAS...

My driver burst in behind me: "Captain, sir, they ARE German guns and their tanks are only 500 yards away," he said in understandable agitation. We had to get away - and quickly.

That the Allied command had been surprised at this almost unbelievable German thrust we all knew. But, this was panic. We went back the way we had come without a backward glance. Only later did we learn that the German onslaught had indeed created a kind of panic, leading to a disordered retreat, soon stemmed - soon reversed, in fact. But we had - my driver and I - come very close to disaster.

Small wonder I always think of that eerie, deserted headquarters in the Ardennes just before Christmas 1944 when I hear Bing sing WHITE CHRISTMAS; and that has been every Christmas since 1944.

(An abridged memory from ARDENNES OFFENSIVE, an American account.)

FROM NORTH

JOHN JOYCE reports that Circle people in the North-East will be holding a 'Christmas Evening' on the 12th December - films, tapes, quiz, turkey dinner, Christmas pudding with Brandy Sauce (!) This comes about because the function held in October was so successful and enjoyable that they felt it was much too long to wait until next Spring for another! It will be held as usual at The Springfield Hotel, Gateshead and we understand that anyone wishing to attend from outside the immediate area can be catered for in that special rates have been obtained from the hotel management for Crosby people. Anyone wishing to attend should get in touch with John Joyce (21 Birchfield Gardens, Low Fell, Gateshead) as soon as possible - phone 0632-878761. All will be welcome. Cost for the evening is £5.00, the cost of the meal only - all else included.

G.R.(Tom) EVANS, 84 Brereton Rd., New Invention, Willenhall, Staffs is organising social events/dances in the West Midlands area, ably assisted by Don Small who keeps meticulous accounts - with profits going to charities. Don Small is at One Lea View, Willenhall, Staffs - get in touch with either Tom or Don if you wish to be associated.

PHIL CLARKE, whose new address we remind you is 150 Hart Plain Aven., Cowplain, Hants, organises THE SOUTHERN BING CROSBY CLUB (under the ICC) and holds regular functions - and Phil is, of course, our leading authority it would seem on video-recordings which figure prominently in the club's meetings. All interested contact Phil.....

Also,in Southampton, W. J. (Jim) NEWELL, 17 Edwina Close, Bitterne, Southampton organises meetings &c. for members in that city - and is now producing a creditable 'local' magazine. Jim is assisted by J. H. (also Jim!) Barber, 306 Swanwick Lane, Lower Swanwick. THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S was, it is claimed, inspired by the church of that name in Southampton - indeed, a few years back Bing was on the point of visiting Southampton to sing in this church. Now, the Southampton club has produced a tape about the church and its associations . We feel this is of tremendous interest locally - but should you be interested, it will cost £2.50 from Jim Newell. Our 'poet' Norman Toogood is a member here.

JOHN BASSETT, see address in TRADING POST, holds Crosby meetings at his home at least twice a year and anyone in the Southend-on-Sea area is welcome - but, a SAE to John in the first place please.
DAVID WARD, 51 St. Andrews St., Lincoln (another of the younger fellas!) would like to organise events for what he determines as the EAST MIDLANDS area. Would appreciate co-operation from those reachable (say) from Lincoln.
GORDON THOMAS, 18 Little Garth, Saffron Lane Est., Leicester would like to do similar things in his town - assistance most welcome.

NOTE: THE PREVIOUS PAGE IS INCORRECTLY NUMBERED DUE TO A RESHUFFLE - YOU DO NOT HAVE A HAPHAZARD COPY! And while we're 'correcting', it was Geo. Smith of Keighley who won the Leeds quiz, and not Eric Jackson!

AND!. Mr. A.C.PRESTON, 3 Hartington Dr., HazelGrove, Stockport, Ches reports that he acted on Bing No. 60 re. US READERS DIGEST 'BING SINGS AGAIN! - but was asked for a further 2.97 dollars, so that the price now is 32.96 dollars for the 8 LP-set plus 6.10 dollars postage (surface). Seems they are adjusting to the current exchange rates - which have been much against the £ since August. Still a bargain really, even with postage the 8LPs are only around £20..

TO SOUTH

BING CROSBY, after repeated enquiries and protests by his British fans about "insufficient" releases of his discs, wrote to Leslie Gaylor, of the British Crosby Society, saying interest in his records was "waning". He added, "I've had a long career recording, and I'm grateful for all the good things which have happened to me, so . . . I'm not despondent."

West End was wowed by American singer **Mary Costa.** She came over to appear in "Candide" at the Saville, and exhibited (a) a sensational soprano voice; (b) a whistleworthy attractiveness.

1959

● **IN RESPONSE to many queries: BING CROSBY'S** next film for showing in England is 'Anything Goes', based on the successful stage musical. Due at the Plaza, Piccadilly, London, July 13. Also in the film: **Donald O'Connor, Phil Harris** and **Mitzi Gaynor.**

Bing sings a-plenty.

Nostalgic note: Eighteen years ago Donald O'Connor—he was 12 then—appeared with Bing in the still well-remembered 'Sing You Sinners'.

JUNE 56

Bing Crosby will croon for you on Sunday (10.45 p.m.)

38

1937

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JULY 1957

BING CROSBY '59

HEY, THERE, G.O.W.R. . .

Congratulations from California

To You and Isidore Green's

'Record & Show Mirror'

BING LETTERS

Reg Bristo,
7 Greenmeadow Close,
CWMBRAN,
GWENT, NP44 4PJ

ALASTAIR AIREY, 18 St. Philip Sq., London, S.W.8: I have recently had some success teaching my school-class singing (which teaching they had previously had from an expert, now departed for family reasons) to records. This is my only means as I cannot play an instrument. My most successful record to singalong with has been Bing's & Co. BUSY DOING NOTHING, an idea which tickles my class no end - and they take turns doing the Bing ad lib bits.
My other successes, if I can call them that, for I must admit that the children with skilled singing instructors do much better, are with Louis Armstrong's IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO, THE FOX with Harry Belafonte and Bing again with YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE - a song I think everyone will like for ever...

> Editor: There goes that song again! Is it the philosophy that appeals - although it IS a catchy melody...Alastair is whimsically breaking new educational ground. The mind is inclined to boggle - what about trying the kids with NOW YOU HAS JAZZ, or LOVE IN BLOOM? Lovely letter though.

JIM HALMS, 17 Ashfield Rd., Finsbury Park, London N4 1NY: We thoroughly enjoyed WE'RE NOT DRESSING and all its wonderful songs. A fascinating cast of famous names - but then in their infancy, as it were! I thought Bing was the star actor of all of them - quite apart from his splendid singing. And what with BIRTH OF THE BLUES a few weeks before....

> Editor: There has been tremendous mail over the BBC's screening of these two films concerning the fine singing (and the fine songs) and Bing's acting, usually denigrated. Of course, both and especially WE'RE NOT DRESSING, were treated lightly, almost trivially, - or else it becomes political! Seemed almost a direct sequel of the Mack Sennets with Bing so casual - and so musical. But say what you like about Bing's acting, he could hold his own with most - and excel over a lot of them. Certainly most of those early films were merely vehicles for Bing's singing. And that's all we really wanted.....

STAN PHILLIPS, 45 Russell Mount, Branksome Wood Rd., Bournemouth, Dorset: I hope you didn't miss the Terry Wogan show (recently) showing Bing in Norway on TV. I only hope some members took a video recording of it for future viewing. I'm not a video-owner myself as yet but one day I hope to be and it would be reassuring to know we might have this fine and historic show.

Editor: No, I missed Wogan's show - but fear not, this Norway show is safely on private video-cassettes at least. I've seen them! But this later news seems to cut across what Trevor Wagstaff has written in this issue for it seems the BBC already has the recording. No matter. This was the show, of course, where it rained torrentially and Bing paid tribute to the Norwegians, not only for braving such rain, but also for their bravery in other ways, clearly referring to their heroic demeanour in enduring a particularly unfortunate German occupation during the Second World War. And again, Bing showed himself to be well aware.

LES STREET, 8 Wyfan Place, Mynachdy, Cardiff: I see the new Decca LP is a rehash of material issued not all that long ago. Few Circle members are likely to buy it as we all have it. Its good to see Bing material released but if it doesn't sell the company willdecidde"Bing doesn't sell these days". Let's hope WORLD RECORDS get the all-clear to put out their proposed Bing double album.

Editor: Quite so; its been the position for years years, really. But let's not forget that Decca don't have all that much Crosby material under their control now - so in the circumstances, they've done well, disappointing as it is to most of us.

NANCY & LARRY SHANNON (our Cabaret-artist members) of 70 Oldfield Rd., Sale, Ches. have written to say that a shop in Manchester often has a large stock of Bing records which they are prepared to obtain and send on to members. An altruistic offer indeed - write with SAE for your particular wants and they will endeavour to help. I understand they refer to secondhand but good condition records.

BILL TOBIN,198 Claydon, Deacon Way, London, SE17: In 1940, a grim year you will remember, I found myself being landed in Egypt, late at night, at Port Tewfik. A train rushed us about 30 miles inland; thence a truck took us several more miles. Getting off the trucks we found ourselves in the middle of an encampment. In no time I was unlucky enough for guard-duty - this entailed walking around the eerie desert about 200 yards from the nearest tents. It was pitch-dark and one could only see ANYTHING by getting down on one knee and peering at the horizon. This particular night at about 11pm it was quiet. Very quiet - until, out of the vast space of the desert came THE FUNNY OLD HILLS by Bing...I was scared. I thought the desert was 'getting' me... I mean, mirages are one thing. Next day, however, I found out that about 3 miles away there was an open-air cinema installed by the Australian Army and they were showing PARIS HONEYMOON! Alas, I couldn't get away. I did meet Bing twice, though. Once in 1962 in an open-air antiques market in Bermondsey (of all places) and was treated to a grin and a large wink. The second occasion was at Heathrow airport when my wife and I received a sing-song "Hello there!" from him. What a charming man he was.

Editor: A typical Bing letter of the kind we get, scores of them. Much regret such a few this time but as you will have seen, we've got a lot into a special edition. Many great letters and stories had to be omitted - and the GEC listing suspended just for this issue.

And now there's just room left for me to reinforce the greetings you saw at the beginning of this issue - this time accompanied by all our contributors and experts. It is the wish of us all that you have a splendid Christmas and that 1982 proves a good year for everyone. You often thank us for "Keeping the memory of Bing so fresh and alive"....

We thank you, the members, for you share that effort with us. Indeed, you are the inspiration entirely for THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE. Truly, our very best wishes - and we'll be with you again in 1982.